SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 429. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 20TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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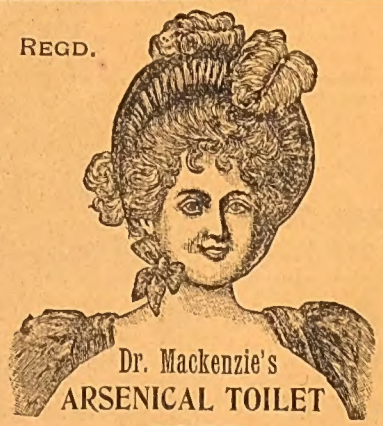

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SHORT STORIES

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No. 429.] For the week ending March 20th, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

DEEDS THAT WON THE EMPIRE.

III.—THE GREAT LORD HAWKE.

"THE great Lord Hawke" is Burke's phrase, and is one of the best-earnt epithets in literature. Yet what does the average Englishman to-day remember of the great sailor who, through the bitter November gales of 1759, kept dogged and tireless watch over the French fleet in Brest, destroyed that fleet with heroic daring amongst the sands of Quiberon—while the fury of a Bay of Biscay tempest almost drowned the roar of his guns—and so crushed a threatened invasion of England?

Hawke has been thrown by all devouring Time into his wallet as mere "alms for oblivion," yet amongst all the sea-dogs who ever sailed beneath "the blood-red flag," no one ever less deserved that fate.

Campbell, in "Ye Mariners of England," groups "Blake and mighty Nelson" together as the two great typical English sailors. Hawke stands midway between them, in point both of time and achievements, though he had more in him of Blake than had Nelson.

He lacked, no doubt, the dazzling electric strain that ran through the warlike genius of Nelson. Hawke's fighting quality was of the grim, dour, home-spun character; but he was a true genius for battle. And as long as Great Britain is a sea-power the memory of the great sailor who crushed Conflans off Quiberon deserves to live.

Hawke, too, was a great man in the age of little men. The fame of the English navy had sunk to the lowest point. Its ships were rotten; its captains had lost their fighting tradition; its fleets were paralysed by a childish system of tactics which made a decisive battle almost impossible.

Hawke describes the *Portland*, a ship of which he was in command, as "iron-sick"; the wood was too rotten, that is, to hold the iron bolts, so that "not a man in the ship had a dry place to sleep in." His men were "tumbling down with scurvy"; his mainmast was so pulverised by dry-rot that a walking stick could be thrust into it.

Of another ship, the *Ramilies*—his favourite ship, too—he says: "It became water-logged whenever it blowed hard." The ships' bottoms grew a rank crop of grass, slime, shells, barnacles, etc., till the sluggish vessels needed almost a gale to move them. Marines were not yet invented; the navy had no uniform.

The French ships of that day were better built, better armed, and sometimes better fought than British ships. A British 70-gun ship in armament and weight of fire was only equal to a French ship of 52 guns. Every considerable fight was followed by a rank crop of court-martials, in which captains were tried for misconduct before the enemy, such as to-day is inconceivable.

Admiral Matthews was broken by court-martial for having with an excess of daring pierced the French line off Toulon, and thus sacrificed pedantic tactics to victory. But the list of court-martials held during the second quarter of the 18th century on British captains for beginning to fight too late, or for leaving off too soon, would, if published, astonish this generation.

After the fight off Toulon in 1744, two admirals and six post-captains were court-martialled. Admiral Byng was shot on his own deck, not exactly as Voltaire's *mot* describes it, *pour encourager les autres*, and not quite for cowardice, for Byng was no coward. But he had no gleam of unselfish patriotic fire, and nothing of the gallant fighting impulse we have learnt to believe is characteristic of the British sailor.

He lost Minorca and disgraced the British flag because he was too dainty to face the stern discomforts of a fight. The corrupt and ignoble temper of English politics—the legacy of Walpole's evil *régime*—poisoned the blood of the navy. No one can have forgotten Macaulay's picture of Newcastle, at that moment Prime Minister of England; the sly, greedy, fawning politician, as corrupt as Walpole, without his genius, without honour, without truth, who loved office only less than he loved his own neck. A

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Prime Minister like Newcastle made possible an admiral like Byng.

Horace Walpole tells the story of how, when the much enduring British public broke into one of its rare but terrible fits of passion after the disgrace of Minorca, and Newcastle was trembling for his own head, a deputation from the city of London waited upon him, demanding that Byng should be put upon his trial.

"Oh, indeed," replied Newcastle with fawning gestures, "he shall be tried immediately. He shall be hanged directly."

It was an age of base men, and the navy—neglected, starved, dishonoured—had lost the great traditions of the past, and did not yet feel the thrill of the nobler spirit soon to sweep over it.

But in 1759 the dazzling intellect and masterful will of the first Pitt controlled the fortunes of England, and the spirit of the nation was beginning to awake. Burns and Wilberforce and the younger Pitt were born that year; Minden was fought; Wolfe saw with dying eyes the French battalions broken on the plains of Abraham and Canada won. But the great event of the year is Hawke's defeat of Conflans off Quiberon.

Hawke was the son of a barrister; he entered the navy at fourteen years of age as a volunteer, was a third lieutenant at twenty-four, and became captain at thirty.

He knew the details of his profession as well as any sea-dog of the forecastle; was quite modern in the keen and humane interest he took in his men; had something of Wellington's high-minded allegiance to duty; while his fighting had a stern but sober thoroughness worthy of Cromwell's Ironsides.

The British people came to realise that he was a sailor with the strain of a bulldog in him, an indomitable fighter, who, ordered to blockade a hostile port, would hang on, in spite of storms and scurvy, while he had a man who could pull a rope or fire a gun; a fighter, too, of the type dear to the British imagination, who took the shortest course to the enemy's line, and would exchange broadsides at pistol-shot distance while his ship floated.

In 1759 a great French army threatened the shores of England. At Havre and Dunkirk huge flotillas of flat-bottomed boats lay at their moorings; 18,000 French veterans were ready to embark. A great fleet, under the command of Conflans—one of the ablest seamen France has ever produced—was gathered at Brest. A French squadron was to break out of Toulon, join Conflans, sweep the narrow seas, and convey the French expedition to English shores. The strategy, if it had succeeded, might have changed the fate of the world.

To Hawke was entrusted the task of blockading Conflans in Brest, and a greater feat of seamanship is not to be found in British records. The French fleet consisted of twenty-five ships, manned by 15,200 men, and carrying 1,598 guns. The British fleet numbered twenty-three ships, with 13,295 men, and carrying 1,596 guns. The two fleets, that is, were nearly equal, the advantage, on the whole, being on the side of the French.

Hawke, therefore, had to blockade a fleet equal to his own, the French ships lying snugly in harbour, the English ships scourged by November gales and rolling in the huge seas of the Bay of Biscay.

Sir Cloudesley Shovel, himself a seaman of the highest quality, said that "an admiral would deserve to be broke who kept great ships out after the end of September, and to be shot if after October." Hawke maintained his blockade of Brest for six months. His captains broke down in health, his men were dying from scurvy, the bottoms of his ships grew foul; it was a stormy season in the stormiest of seas.

Again and again the wild north-west gales blew the British admiral off his cruising ground. But he fought his way back, sent his ships, singly or in couples, to Torbay or Plymouth for a moment's breathing space, but himself held on, with a grim courage and unslumbering vigilance which have never been surpassed. On November 6th a tremendous westerly gale swept over the English cruising-ground. Hawke battled with it for three days and then ran, storm-driven and half-dismantled, to Torbay for shelter on the 10th.

He put to sea again on the 12th. The gale had veered round to the S.W., but blew as furiously as ever, and Hawke was once more driven back on the 13th to Torbay. He struggled out again on the 14th, to find that the French had escaped! The gale that blew Hawke from his post, brought a French Squadron down the Channel, which ran into Brest and joined Conflans there; and on the 14th, when Hawke was desperately fighting his way back to his post, Conflans put to sea, and, with the gale behind him, ran on his course to Quiberon.

There he hoped to brush aside the squadron keeping guard over the French transports, embark the powerful French force assembled there, and sweep down on the English coast. The wild weather, Conflans reckoned, would keep Hawke storm-bound in Torbay till this scheme was carried out.

But Hawke with his whole fleet, fighting his way in the teeth of the gale, reached Ushant on the very day Conflans broke out of Brest, and, fast as the French fleet ran before the gale, the white sails of Hawke's ships, showing over the stormy rim of the horizon, came on the Frenchman's track.

Hawke's frigates, outrunning those heavy sea-waggons, his line-of-battle-ships, hung on Conflans' rear. The main body of the British fleet followed, staggering under their pyramids of sails, with wet decks and the wild north-west gale on their quarter. Hawke's best sailers gained steadily on the laggards of Conflans' fleet. Had Hawke obeyed the puerile tactics of his day he would have dressed his line and refused to attack at all unless he could bring his fleet into action. But, as Hawke himself said afterwards, he "had determined to attack them in the old way and make downright work of them," and he signalled his leading ships to attack the moment they brought an enemy's ship within fire. Conflans could not abandon his slower ships, and he reluctantly swung round his van and formed line to meet the attack.

As the main body of the English came up, the French admiral suddenly adopted a strategy which might well have baffled a less daring adversary than Hawke. He ran boldly in shore towards the mouth of the Vilaine. It was a wild stretch of most dangerous coast; the granite Breton hills above splinters of rocky islets, on which the huge sea rollers tore themselves into white foam below; and, more dangerous still, and stretching far out to sea, wide reaches of shoal and quicksand.

From the north-west the gale blew more wildly than ever; the sky was black with flying clouds; on the Breton hills the spectators clustered in thousands. The roar of the furious breakers and the shrill note of the gale filled the very air with tumult. Conflans had pilots familiar with the coast, yet it was bold seamanship on his part to run down to a lee shore on such a day of tempest.

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Hawke had no pilots and no charts; but he saw before him, half hidden in mist and spray, the great hulls of the ships over which he had kept watch so long in Brest harbour; and he anticipated Nelson's strategy forty-years afterwards.

"Where there is room for the enemy to swing," said Nelson, "there is room for me to anchor."

"Where there is a passage for the enemy," urged Hawke, "there is a passage for me. Where a Frenchman can sail, an Englishman can follow. Their pilots shall be ours. If they go to pieces in the shoals they will serve as beacons for us."

And so, on that wild November afternoon, with the great billows that the Bay of Biscay hurls on that stretch of ironbound coast riding shoreward in league-long rollers, Hawke flung himself into the boiling cauldron of rocks and shoals and quicksand. No more daring deed was ever done at sea.

Measured by mere fighting courage there were thousands of men in the British fleet as brave as Hawke. But the iron nerve that, without an instant's pause, in a scene so wild, on a shore so perilous, and a sea sown so thickly with unknown dangers, flung a whole fleet into battle was probably possessed by no man but Hawke amongst the 30,000 sailors who fought at Quiberon.

The fight, taking all its incidents into account, is perhaps as dramatic as anything known in the history of war. The British ships came rolling on, grim and silent, throwing huge sheets of spray from their bluff bows.

An 80-ton French ship, *Le Formidable*, lay in their track; and each huge British liner, as it swept past to attack the main body of the French, vomited on the unfortunate *Le Formidable* a dreadful broadside! And upon each British ship, in turn, as it rolled past in spray and flame, the gallant Frenchman flung an answering broadside! Soon the thunder of the guns deepened, as ship after ship found its antagonist.

The short November day was already darkening; the thunder of surf and of tempest answered in yet wilder notes the deep-throated guns, the wildly-rolling fleets offered one of the strangest sights the sea has ever witnessed.

The green waters rushed through, quenched the fire of the guns, and swept the sailors from their quarters.

Soon Hawke himself, in the *Royal George* of 100 guns, came on, stern and majestic, seeking some fitting antagonist. This was the great ship that afterwards sank ignobly at its anchorage at Spithead, with twice "four hundred men," a tale which, for every British boy, is made famous in Cowper's immortal ballad. But what an image of terror and of battle the *Royal George* seemed, as in the bitter November storm she bore down on the French fleet.

Hawke disdained meaner foes, and bade his pilot lay him alongside Conflans' flagship, *Le Soliel Royal*. Shoals were foaming on every side, and the pilot warned Hawke he could not carry the *Royal George* further without risking the ship.

"You have done your duty," said Hawke, "in pointing out the risk; and now lay me alongside *Le Soliel Royal*."

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A French 70-gun ship, *La Superbe*, threw itself betwixt Hawke and Conflans. Slowly the huge mass of the *Royal George* bore up, so as to bring its broadside to bear on *La Superbe*, and then the English guns broke into a tempest of flame. Through the spray and mist the masts of the unfortunate Frenchman seemed to tumble; a tempest of cries was heard; the British sailors ran back their guns to reload.

A sudden gust cleared the atmosphere, and *La Superbe* had vanished! Her topmasts gleamed wet for a moment through the green seas, but, with her crew of 650 men, she had sunk, as though crushed by a thunderbolt, beneath a single broadside from the *Royal George*.

Then from the nearer hills, the crowds of French spectators saw Hawke's blue flag and Conflans' white pennon approach each other, and the two great ships, with slanting decks and fluttering canvas, and rigging blown to leeward, began their fierce duel. Other French ships crowded to their admiral's aid, and at one time no fewer than seven French line-of-battle ships were pouring their fire into the mighty and shot-torn hulk of the *Royal George*.

Howe, in the *Magnamine*, was engaged in fierce conflict meanwhile with the *Thesée*, when a sister English ship, the *Montague*, was flung by a huge sea on the quarter of Howe's ship, and practically disabled it. The *Torbay*, under Captain Keppel, took Howe's place with the *Thesée*, and both ships had their lower deck ports open, so as to fight with their heaviest guns. The unfortunate Frenchman rolled to a great sea; the wide-open ports dipped, the green water rushed through, quenched the fire of the guns, and swept the sailors from their quarters. The great ship shivered, rolled over still more wildly, and then, with 700 men, went down like a stone! The British ship, with better luck and better seamanship, got its ports closed, and was saved.

Several French ships by this time had struck, but the sea was too wild to allow them to be taken possession of. Night was falling fast; the roar of the tempest still deepened, and seven huge French liners, throwing their guns overboard, ran for shelter across the bar of the Vilaine, the pursuing English following them almost within reach of the spray flung from the rocks. Hawke, then, by signals, brought his fleet to anchor for the night under the lee of the island of Dumat.

It was a wild night, filled with the thunder of the surf and the shriek of the gale, and all through it, as the English ships rode, madly straining at their anchors, they could hear the sounds of distress guns.

One of the ships that perished that night was a fine English seventy-four, the *Resolution*.

The morning broke as wild as the night. To leeward two great line-of-battle ships could be seen on the rocks; but in the very midst of the English fleet, its masts gone, its hull battered with shot, was the flagship of Conflans—*Le Soleil Royal*.

In the darkness and tempest of the night the unfortunate Frenchman, all unwitting, had anchored in the very midst of his foes. As soon as through the grey and misty light of the November dawn the English ships were discovered, Conflans cut his cable and drifted ashore.

The *Essex* was ordered to pursue her, and her captain, an impetuous Irishman, obeyed his orders so literally that he, too, ran ashore, and the *Essex* became a total wreck.

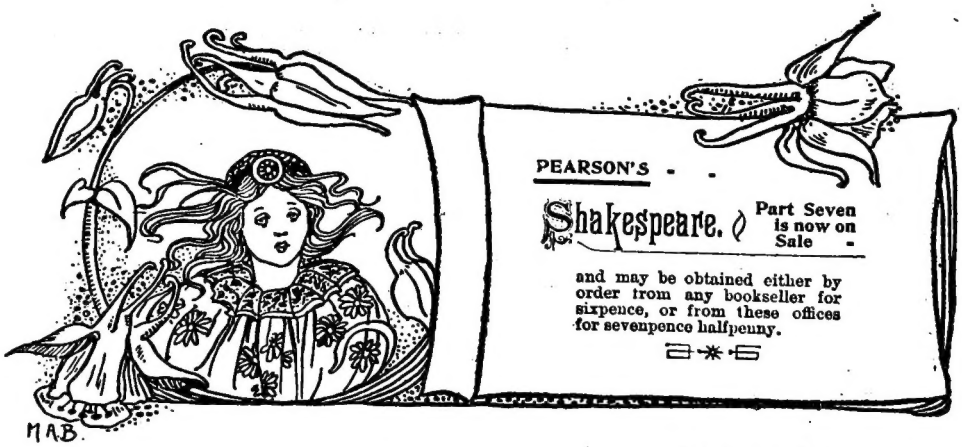
"When I consider," Hawke wrote to the Admiralty, "the season of the year, the hard gales on the day of action, a flying enemy, the shortness of the day, and the coasts they were on, I can boldly affirm that all that could possibly be done has been done."

History confirms that judgment. There is no other record of a great sea-fight fought under conditions so wild, and scarcely any other sea-battle has achieved results more decisive.

Trafalgar itself scarcely exceeds it in the quality of effectiveness. Quiberon saved England from invasion. It destroyed for the moment the naval power of France. Its political results in France cannot be described here, but they were of the first importance.

The victory gave a new complexion to English naval warfare. Rodney and Howe were Hawke's pupils; Nelson himself, who was a post-captain when Hawke died, learnt his tactics in Hawke's school. No sailor ever served England better than Hawke.

And yet, such is the irony of human affairs, that on the very day when Hawke was adding the thunder of his guns to the diapason of surf tempest off Quiberon, and crushing the fleet that threatened England with invasion, a London mob was burning his effigy for having allowed the French to escape his blockade.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"What creatures they are—those women! A glance of an eye, a chance touch of a soft little hand, a little ear peering out beneath shining bands of brown hair, a twinkling mouse of a foot in its satin slipper, and it's all over with a man. But, if he just chance to get a kiss in the dark, he's lost for ever, carried off by enchantment."

"Hush, Jean!" here up spoke the pretty little lady sitting opposite Mr. Laroque, at his own table, Mrs. Laroque by name; and a blush that made her prettier and more piquant than ever crimsoned her somewhat pale cheeks, and even the pearly tips of her ears that just showed themselves beneath "shining bands of brown hair."

"It is true, is it not, *m'amie?*" persisted Mr. Laroque laughing at the pretty threat of that upraised finger. "Here's Besnon, almost bursting with curiosity to know how I, Jean Laroque, six months ago, when he went to Paris a sworn bachelor and *bon camarade*, should have been entrapped, bewitched, inveigled by the arts of an enchantress, and transformed into a sober husband and master of a household. I must tell him, *petite*, and if you would not listen you must run away."

With a defiant shake of the little hand, and a pout of the red lips that only made them more tempting, Mrs. Laroque rose from the table. As her husband held the door for her to pass, he said: "It will be told when thou hast prepared for the opera. Adorn thyself, *ma belle*, and in one little half hour return to us magnificent and ravishing."

A wealthy bachelor, of quiet habits, and, unlike the majority of his countrymen, shrinking from society, Mr. Laroque was quite the last man I had expected to find, on my return from a half-year's sojourn in France, married and settled in a handsome but unostentatious household. Where had he found this beautiful, piquant, dark-haired girl of twenty, who presided so gracefully at his table, and was evidently very much in love with her shy, stately, middle-aged husband?

This was just what he was about to tell me. Mr. Laroque, having been resident in England since his boyhood, spoke good idiomatic English, with only a slight accent, interspersing his conversation usually, however, with a good many French words. As these are far from being essential to the narrative, we will not record them.

"I found there was a large party."

"Tom Hungerford—you know Tom?" he began, "spent a month with me a year ago last autumn, at my little place at the north, where I go always for the shooting; and in return he exacted from me a promise that I would go down with him to his father-in-law's house in the country, for the Christmas holidays.

"'Only a family party,' said Tom, and I was foolish enough to take him in a literal sense. I knew Tom's wife, and had been introduced to that wonderful boy of his that transcends all other children, and I fancied I was to meet just them and the papa and mamma. I thought I might endure that for a few days, especially as Mrs. Tom Hungerford is only a pretty statue, and never annoys one with small talk.

"Fancy my astonishment, then, when I found there was a large party—Mrs. Tom's married sister and husband, and her married brothers and their wives, and a host of babies and nurses, and—ah, what was worst of all!—a half score of girls. Think, my friend, of that! Jean Laroque, bachelor and woman-hater, trapped and imprisoned in a country house, with at least ten girls with bewildering eyes, and curls, and voices, and hats and dresses, all levelled at me because I was the only single man of the party, excepting always a lad of sixteen who was brother or cousin to every one of them.

"We arrived on Christmas eve, and as I took Mrs. Sheldon, Mrs. Tom's mamma, in to dinner, and talked politics with the Judge all the evening, I managed to survive the hours pretty well. Next day we all went to church, I still in attendance on Mrs. Sheldon, who was a little old lady, very grand and stately, like the picture of a *marquise* of the *ancien régime*. Afterwards came a long walk with Tom, then dinner, and I had been twenty-four hours in the house without speaking to a girl. Of course there had been a general introduction the previous evening, but to have saved my life I could not have told the name of one of them.

"But in the evening we must needs have games for the children, so they said, and blind man's buff among other things. I soon found that I was not able to escape my share of it.

"I give you my word, I could not see a particle, except

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a glimpse straight downward of my chin and the side of my nose. I had been blind-folded carefully by the aid of two or three pairs of hands, and then twirled three times round, and set off on my journey by a push.

"Here was a dreadful embarrassment—blind—yes, blinded with a handkerchief—and set to catch somebody—one of those girls, or a married sister or aunt, who could tell? and oh! fearful task! to tell the name or kiss the one I should catch.

"That was the penalty of being introduced as Tom's friend. 'We are quite a family party,' they said; 'we will not make a stranger of Mr. Laroque.' And so I must be blindfolded and set to catch somebody; and if I could not guess who I had caught—and how could I where all were strangers?—I was to pay the forfeit of a kiss.

"I knew most of the names, but it was quite impossible that I should identify the individuals to whom they belonged, even with the help of my eyes. How then was I to do it by the touch alone? The kiss was already a foregone conclusion.

"I groped about with little alacrity, and of course caught nobody—just what I had intended. Garments rustled near, and even brushed me as their wearers leisurely moved out of my way. I had only to reach out my hands to catch some of these languid beauties, but I knew very well what must follow, and had not courage for the feat. If only the children had not been sent to bed, I would have brought that fact to an end very soon! I did not see then how right it was that I had not been drawn into the game while they stayed.

"Presently they seemed to read my thoughts, or perhaps Tom Hungerford gave them a hint, for they—those girls, I mean—began to inflict intolerable abuse upon me. They pinched my arms, they pulled my hair and my coat, and then, hoydans that they were, ran away tittering and jeering.

"'It was quite time to end this,' I said, for I was aroused to retaliation. The catching and, and—which was to follow—should soon be over. Suddenly I began to dart about, and the fluttering and musical little screams increased. There was frantic haste, and sundry crashes and collisions that convinced me that the 'play' had become extremely earnest.

"Looking straight downward I could sometimes catch a glance of a stooping figure gliding past me; but presently I lost the power of seeing even so little. I was groping in a narrow passage, for my hands touched the wall on either side, and probably a dark one. Before me I could hear a soft rustle of garments, and a low hurried breathing. Probably one of my tormentors was hidden there, and could not make her escape. If so the game was nearly ended.

"Pressing forward, as I expected, my hands soon came in contact with the head of a crouching figure drawn closely into a corner.

"I felt smooth strands of hair, a little wreath or bunch of ribands, a warm, satin-like cheek. The hair might have belonged to any of the younger ladies, with the exception of two or three who wore ringlets, and their cheeks were all round and smooth with health. Of course, I could not guess who this was.

"If she would only speak; I knew the voice of Tom Hungerford's wife, and it might be she. But not a sound issued from her lips—the figure trembled violently and breathed hurriedly, but gave no other sign of life.

"'Rise up, mademoiselle,' I said at last. 'Tell your name, and then I shall announce it, and go away at once.' I thought I had hit on a brilliant expedient, and the lady, rising, seemed about to give me the required explanation, when with a great shout, three or four persons entered the other end of the passage.

"'Mr. Laroque has caught someone,' I heard them say. 'Who is it? Tell us whom you have caught!'

"'Yes, Laroque,' shouted Tom, 'give us the name, or honestly pay the forfeit.'

"'Speak,' I whispered to the lady whose arm I held, but, trembling, she remained silent.

"'Indeed, I cannot tell,' I said, and then another great shout rose from rosy lips. I was angry and desperate. I drew the slight figure towards me. I tore the handkerchief from my face, and, bending down, I pressed a resounding kiss upon a pair of lips that pouted with annoyance as their owner struggled to release herself.

"There was another shout, but I was scarcely conscious of it. In my own country I have dark, rare wines which seem to send an electric thrill, as of new and abundant life, through my veins. In effect like this, but a thousand times more intoxicating, was the draught I had just tasted. Elate, triumphant, yet half giddy under the new exhilaration I experienced, I advanced towards the group that thronged the entrance to the drawing-room. I had drawn within my arm the hand of the lady I had caught and—but no matter. I was recalled to myself by the sound of angry voices, and by feeling the little figure trembling and swaying by my side.

"'Go to your room at once, Miss Ray,' old Mrs. Sheldon was saying, while angry exclamations burst from the lips of the younger ladies—'astonishing assurance!' 'such impertinence!' 'prowling in the passage on purpose!'—all directed apparently to the little creature I was supporting.

"Before I could find words to express my surprise at a scene I was far from comprehending, Miss Ray had quietly withdrawn from my arm. Facing the group that frowned upon her, she spoke with spirit, though with a piteous tremour in her sweet, clear voice.

"'Indeed, Mrs. Sheldon and ladies, I assure you I had no intention of committing an impertinence. I came down to speak to Mrs. Charles Sheldon about Bella, who is very restless and feverish. While I was endeavouring to attract Mrs. Sheldon's attention this gentleman came out, I moved back, but he followed me up the passage, and I could not escape. For what has passed further, I am not responsible.'

"'Indeed, madam, she is not,' I found voice to say. 'I caught her fairly, and was, of course, unable to name a lady I had never seen. If, however, in my ignorance of your customs, I have done wrong, I trust to be pardoned by all present, especially by this lady, who, it seems to me, has been the greatest sufferer.'

"'No pardon is required by you, Mr. Laroque,' replied Mrs. Sheldon coldly; and she added, return to your room, Miss Ray, and if you want anything in future, please ring or send Miss Bella's nurse.'

"Miss Ray bent her head and turned away in silence. I gave her my hand to lead her to the stairs, but she declined it with thanks, and I heard a low sob as she went wearily up the long flight.

"'I beg you will forget the impertinence of that girl,' said Mrs. Hungerford, as we all returned to the drawing-room. 'She is my sister's nursery governess, and though generally well-behaved has probably enough of the curiosity of her class to lead her to intrude here. I hope Sarah will dismiss her at once. Nothing is more destructive to household quiet than the slightest insubordination of dependents. Miss Ray must be taught her place.'

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"'But what, then, is her place, madam?' I asked, I fear not very politely, for, with the intoxication of that kiss lingering about me, these remarks jarred painfully upon my feelings. 'She surely has the manners and refinement of a lady.'

"'No one could expect a lady to make a companion of her nursery governess, or introduce her as an equal to her friends,' said Mrs. Hungerford; and her mother, who had been listening, explained further:

"'Miss Ray has been well and carefully educated. Her father once held a high position, and her mother was a well-bred and pleasing woman. Their daughter, an orphan and poor, sinks to a lower sphere. It is an undoubted impertinence in her to venture beyond its confines.'

"I listened with deference to these ladies, but I was not satisfied. How could I be when all my memories of Miss Ray were so fresh—her gentle young beauty, her spirited, yet lady-like manners, her quiet dignity, and, above all, the kiss that yet thrilled like fire along my veins? I felt the spirit of a champion aroused within me. I had brought this trouble upon the unoffending girl—was I not bound to protect her? Yet I had the tact to see that it were better for me not to plead her cause at present.

"There were no more games after this—the excitement of this scene had destroyed all desire for them. Mrs. Charles Sheldon withdrew to look after her sick child, possibly to scold Miss Ray, the ladies drew into groups, whispering of what had occurred, and the gentlemen went away to slippers and cigars.

"All but myself. I could not pollute the lips that had touched Miss Ray's with the vile weed I went to my bed in a delirium, half induced by the ecstasy of my new sensation, half by impotent anger against those I named my persecutors.

"These thoughts pursued me through my dreams and were with me when I awoke. From my window, in the early morning, I saw Miss Ray with the children in the grounds, and I hastened to join her, that I might seek forgiveness for the unintentional wrong I had done her. The presence of the children removed all impropriety from the act, and I thought I should feel more in charity with myself if I assured this young lady that, let her position here be what it would, I felt for her as much respect as for the highest lady in the land.

"When I had returned to the house, half-an-hour later, I had made a discovery, and that was that I should never be quite happy until I had the right to repeat the kiss I had stolen as often as I chose—and, further, that that was likely to be very often indeed. If Miss Ray had looked very pretty, delicate, and refined under the advantageous circumstances attending our first meeting, all these attractions were enhanced by the clear morning air, her own modest self-respect, and the charming embarrassment which the sight of me caused her. I had come down to the Elms priding myself on my confirmed bachelorhood, and contrasting my free, 'unhoused condition' most favourably with that of my friend Tom, who was the slave of the multitudinous fancies of a capricious wife. But all was changed! That kiss had wrought the miracle of revitalising the heart which I thought was dead to all tender emotions. I was as desperately in love—I at thirty-five—as any boy of twenty with his earliest flame.

"I did not see Miss Ray many times at the Elms. My respect for her, her own sense of propriety, alike forbade clandestine meetings. Sometimes she came into the drawing-room to play for the children's dances, when I always showed her marked deference. Once or twice I encountered her abroad. I learnt she had been discharged, and was about to go to London. I obtained her address there, and pleased myself with the thought of meeting her.

"I was disappointed in this. Only one night she spent with the relative to whose house I had been directed, and then went away to a distant situation which Mrs. Sheldon had procured for her. For a whole year—(do you not recall the restlessness that used to excite your mirth?)—I wandered about, my soul disquieted with an intense longing to see her once more, to snatch her from a life of toil, to claim her as mine, to make the kiss which was such a delicious memory, a sweet, ever-renewed reality.

"At last, when I had come almost to despair of the realisation of this intense desire, I suddenly and all unexpectedly encountered her one day in a public street. She had returned, and was staying with the relation of whom I knew. She met me with a blush and a smile, and a timid pressure of the hand that I interpreted as favourable to my hopes. And she did not deny me the pleasure of meeting her at her house.

"Encountered her one day in a public street."

"There is not much more to tell. I have told you about the kiss, and its consequences were for me the dearest, sweetest, brightest of pretty little wives—for her a home where she is cherished and beloved, and where I believe my efforts to make her happy have been entirely successful.

"Her only fault consists in the bit of sly malice with which she sometimes insinuates how different the consequences must have been had I chanced to catch and kiss somebody else on that memorable occasion—for instance, one of those black-eyed or flaxen-haired girls, who are now the very dear friends of Mrs. Laroque, once the poor Miss Ray."

Oscar Reffel.

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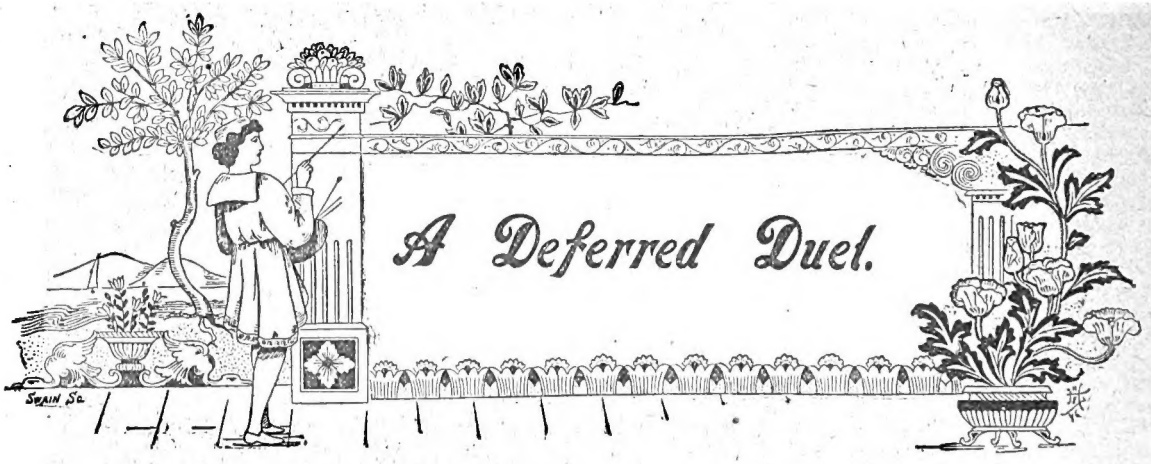

A Deferred Duel.

We were stationed at a small town. The life of an officer of the line is well known; exercise and review in the morning, dinner at the captain's or at the tavern, in the evening a bowl of punch and cards. In the whole town there was no one who even dreamt of such a thing as receiving company. We used often to meet at a brother officer's in the evening, and only there caught sight of an epaulette.

In our little circle there was one Russian, a man about thirty-five years of age, and therefore considered quite a veteran among us. His greater experience gave him a certain authority, and his habitual serious, almost gloomy aspect and sharp tongue awed us. His very existence was enveloped in mystery. Although a typical Russian, his name was a foreign one; he had distinguished himself as an officer of the Tenth Hussars, and no one could imagine why he had left that regiment to live in a wretched little place, where life was not only monotonous, but costly.

He always went on foot wrapped in his black cloak, and though always cordial and pressing in his invitations to dinner, that meal consisted of merely two or three dishes, prepared by an old retired soldier; champagne, however, was poured forth freely. No one really knew whether he was rich or poor, but neither did anyone dare question him thereupon.

We had the freedom of his library, consisting almost entirely of military and romantic works. If perchance we forgot to return a borrowed book, we were never reminded to do so, but, on the other hand, I never knew him to return a book borrowed from us. His principal occupation was practising pistol-shooting; the walls of his room were literally honeycombed with pistol shots. A magnificent collection of pistols seemed to be the one luxury he allowed himself, and his skill in the use of the weapon was such that if he had proposed to shoot an apple off our very heads, not one of us would have hesitated to allow it.

Duels were often the theme of our conversations, but Sylvio, as we called him, never took part in such discussions; and if asked whether he had ever fought in a duel, would drily answer "Yes;" but the details of his encounter never followed, and it was well known that such questions were extremely disagreeable to him. We all felt certain that some victim of his fatal skill lay heavy upon his conscience.

Never was he suspected of cowardice; there are some men who carry in their very aspect a refutation to any such suspicion. Yet something occurred that greatly astonished us. One day there were ten of us dining at Sylvio's, and, as usual, drinking hard. After dinner we asked our host to take a hand at cards. Although contrary to his custom, he yielded to our entreaties, and throwing fifty ducats in the pool, began to deal. We all crowded round the table, and the game began. He played in silence, never raising a question nor asking an explanation. If the marker made a mistake he made good the deficiency, and if the error were in his favour, at once made a note of it.

We knew his ways of old, and let him alone; but this time there was present a comrade who had but lately joined us, and he, in a moment of distraction, doubled his bet. Sylvio made a note of it. The officer, thinking he had made a mistake, tried to explain, but Sylvio went on cutting the cards without heeding him. Losing patience, the officer seized a pencil and crossed out the extra sum: Sylvio took up the pencil and re-wrote it. Excited by drink and goaded by our laughter, his antagonist thought himself insulted, lost his temper, and catching up a candelabrum which lay near to his hand, hurled it at Sylvio's head, who dodged, narrowly escaping the dangerous missile. Rising, white with ire, and his eyes flashing:

"Leave the room!" he cried, "and thank God this has happened beneath my roof."

It was easy to foresee the result of such an encounter, and we all looked upon our comrade as a doomed man.

He left the room, saying that, having insulted his host, he was ready to give him any satisfaction he demanded.

We went on playing for a few moments, but seeing that Sylvio's mind was no longer on the game, we left for our respective lodgings, discussing the impending vacancy in our regiment. Next morning, at review, we were wondering whether the poor lieutenant was still alive, when he himself appeared on the scene. He had not yet heard from Sylvio. Going to the latter's house, later in the day, we found him in the yard, pistol in hand, shooting bullet after bullet into an ace of spades stuck on the back door. He received us as usual, and made no allusion to last evening's occurrence.

Three days went by, and our lieutenant was still in the flesh. We wondered if Sylvio would not fight. He did not, contenting himself with a slight excuse on the part of his opponent. This event cost Sylvio much of his prestige. At a certain age nothing is harder to

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forgive than cowardice, valour being considered the highest of all virtues and an excuse for all vices.

However, little by little the incident was forgotten, and Sylvio regained part of his ascendancy over us. Only I could never feel the same towards him, for more than all others had I been fascinated by him, my youthful imagination endowing him with all the attributes of the mysterious hero in a novel. I think he in turn liked me, for only when alone in my company did he forego his cynical manner, and talk openly, simply, and agreeably.

But, after the above incident, when, in my eyes, his honour had received a stain which he did not remove, I could not be the same with him, and found it perfectly impossible to meet his eye fairly. Sylvio was too clever not to perceive this change and divine its cause—indeed, he made several advances towards an explanation, which I refused to meet, until at last he apparently gave up. From that time I never saw Sylvio alone, and all intercourse between us ceased.

Inhabitants of great cities know nothing of the sensation caused by post days in a little town like ours. Tuesdays and Fridays, the officers' headquarters were filled with eager, expectant faces; one expects money, another letters, another newspapers. Letters are devoured at once, and the news goes the rounds, and is discussed on the spot. On such days headquarters present an animated appearance.

Sylvio received his letters through the military post, and was always with us on post days. On one such occasion he was handed a letter. I watched him as he tore it eagerly open and perused its contents with flashing eyes. His strange manner passed unnoticed, each one being absorbed in his own affairs.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am obliged to leave here at once—to-night, in fact—but beg you will all previously dine with me for the last time. And I expect you, especially, without fail," he added, turning to me. He then hurriedly left us.

When I reached Sylvio's lodgings in the evening, my fellow-officer had preceded me. The furniture had already been removed, leaving nothing but the bare walls, so curiously honeycombed with bullet-holes. Our host was in good spirits, and we soon all followed suit; champagne-corks flew about, glasses were filled and refilled, and we heartily bade our friend God-speed. It was when we rose to go, when my turn came to say good-bye, Sylvio seized my hand and whispered:

"I must have speech with you."

I remained with him. When the last guest had left, he seated himself opposite me, and for some time we smoked in silence. Sylvio was deep in thought; not a sign remained of his nervous gaiety. As I looked at his pale face and eyes, encircled by the thick smoke of our pipes, he had the appearance of a spirit of the nether world. At last he broke silence:

"We shall probably not meet again. I wish to speak a few parting words. You may observe that I care little for public opinion, but I like you, and would regret leaving you under a false conception of my character."

He stopped to refill his glass. I remained silent.

"You have thought it strange I did not exact satisfaction from that drunken idiot who insulted me at cards. Having the choice of weapons, his life was in my hands, and mine in comparative security. I might attribute my behaviour to grandeur of soul, but disdain to lie; could I have punished him without risking my life, he would not have escaped."

I raised my eyes to Sylvio in horror.

"Yes, that is the truth," he continued. "I had no right to risk my life. Six years ago I received a blow, and the man who struck me still lives."

My curiosity was quickly excited.

"You did not fight?" I asked.

"We fought and here is the proof," he answered, at the same time taking up a soldier's cap and placing it upon his head. I noticed a small round hole just above his forehead. "I served in the Tenth Hussars. You know me, and perhaps have seen that I am used to be first in everything. In my youth it was to me an absolute necessity that it should be so. In my day it was fashionable to be fast; I was the wildest youngster in the regiment—in the army, I might say. Hard drinkers were much applauded. I could out-drink the famous Dobroski, whose prowess in that line was celebrated. In our regiment duels were of more than

"Seeing him courted by all."

daily occurrence, and in each one I was either principal or second. My brother officers worshipped me, and my superiors let me alone as an incurable case.

"I was enjoying my laurels when a young man, rich and of illustrious lineage—permit me to withhold his name—joined us. Never had I met a more gifted man—young, talented, handsome, gay to excess, brave as a lion, of unbounded wealth—all these advantages were his besides his great name. You can well imagine the place he at once took among us. My sway was over. He at first sought my friendship, but was repulsed and drew back with indifference. I hated him; his popularity filled me with rage. I tried to draw him into a quarrel, but his answer to all my sarcastic speeches were so

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much wittier than mine that my rage and jealousy grew apace, for I felt his superiority.

"At length, one night at a ball, seeing him courted by all, and specially by a young lady I greatly admired, I approached him and whispered a bitter insult in his ear. This was too much, and, losing his temper, he struck me full in the face. We drew our swords. The ladies fainted! and although bloodshed was prevented on the spot, a duel was arranged that very night.

"At daybreak I was at the appointed place with two seconds, awaiting my rival with much impatience. It had been a sultry night, and the sun, just rising, was oppressively hot. In a few moments I saw him coming leisurely towards me, on foot, and with only one second. I advanced and saw he held his cap, which was full of cherries, in his hand. I had the right to shoot first, but my pulse beat so that I could not be sure of my aim, and therefore insisted that he should shoot first. He refused. We then agreed to draw lots. Fortune favoured her darling. He shot, and the bullet pierced my cap.

"It was my turn now—at last his life was in my hands. I looked eagerly at him, trying to find the slightest sign of fear. He was quietly awaiting my shot, eating cherries, the stones of which he threw at my feet. It was exasperating. 'What is the good,' thought I, 'of taking a life so little valued?' A devilish thought struck me. Dropping my hand I said:

"'Since you are breakfasting so calmly, you are scarcely prepared to die. Allow me to wait until you have finished your cherries.'

"'Do not distress yourself, sir, I pray,' he answered. 'You have one shot at me. At present, or at any time, I am at your service.'

"I turned to my seconds, saying: 'I will not shoot to-day.'

"The duel was over.

"I asked for leave of absence, and came to this little town, where revenge has been my daily thought. The time has come."

Sylvio handed me the letter he had received that day. Someone—an agent, I believe—wrote to say that the "individual in question was about to marry a beautiful young girl."

"You know," continued Sylvio, "who is the 'individual' alluded to. Well, I go to Moscow, and we will see if to-morrow or the day after he will be as indifferent to death as the morning he was eating cherries."

Sylvio stood up and paced up and down the room like a caged tiger. I watched him intently, and could see the fierce struggle the conflicting passions held in his breast.

In a moment the servant entered to say the horses were ready. Sylvio grasped my hand, we embraced, and, hurriedly seizing a travelling bag and a brace of pistols, which proved his only luggage, he sprang quickly into the carriage and was gone.

Many years after, business made it imperative for me to settle in the little town of Staroduv. In spite of steady occupations, I often missed the careless, happy life of former years. I never could get used to the long, companionless spring and winter evenings. The days were well enough spent, talking to my overseer, looking over the crops, or attending to the buildings I was having erected, but after sunset I was at a loss what to do with myself.

The few available books I knew by heart, my old housekeeper Nerolowna's stories wearied me, and the labourers' songs gave me the blues. I tried brandy, but "melancholy drunkards" abounded. My only neighbours were of this number, and their constant complaints and dullness were too much for me. Thus my sole refuge was to dine late and retire early, in this manner I could shorten the days and lengthen the nights.

Within four miles of my house lay a fine property belonging to the Countess Bercheneff. No one but the overseer lived there—the Countess had spent only the first month of her marriage on her beautiful estate. About two years after my coming to Staroduv, it was rumoured that the Countess and her husband would come to spend the summer at their beautiful country-seat. In fact, they arrived at the beginning of June, and, as was to be expected, their advent caused quite a commotion in our little town.

For my part, the coming of such charming neighbours made quite a change in my life. I was especially anxious to meet the Countess, and, accordingly, the first Sunday after their arrival I called to present my respects. As being their nearest neighbour I was shown into the Count's private sitting-room, which was luxuriously furnished—books, bronzes, rugs, *bric-à-brac*, an immense mirror over the mantelpiece, etc. It was so long since I had seen any finery of the kind that a strange shyness came over me, and I awaited my host's entrance with feelings akin to the trepidation of an office-seeker.

The door opened to admit a handsome, noble-looking man, about thirty-three years of age, who advanced and held out his hand with a pleasant smile. His frank and cordial reception somewhat restored my equanimity, and I was beginning to regain my usual manner, when the Countess entered and I at once relapsed into my former shyness. A truly beautiful woman! The Count presented me, and I floundered about trying to appear at ease, but in reality feeling very hot and uncomfortable. Perceiving my embarrassment, and with true tact and good breeding, the Count and Countess conversed between themselves, treating me as they would an old acquaintance.

As my eye wandered round the room it fell upon a picture hanging opposite me. It was not the painting itself—a Swiss landscape, I think, that arrested my attention, but two small round bullet-holes which pierced the picture, one immediately above the other.

"Humph! that was a wonderful shot," I could not help remarking.

"Yes, indeed," said the Count. "And you, are you a good shot?"

"Middling; with a pistol I am used to I can hit a card at thirty paces."

"Pretty good," said the Countess; then, turning to her husband: "Could you do as well?"

"I doubt it," he answered. "I used to be a good shot, but have not tried my hand for over four years."

"In that case, I'll wager you could not even hit a card at twenty paces. Without constant practice, one loses all dexterity. The best shot I ever knew split three bullets on the edge of a knife every day before dinner—but the practice was as great a necessity to him as the meal. Why, if there were a fly on the wall—you smile, Countess, but I swear 'tis true—he called to his servant: 'Cousma, a pistol!'—and bang! scarcely taking aim, there was the fly flattened out on the wall."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated the Count. "And what was your friend's name?"

"Sylvio."

"You knew Sylvio!" exclaimed the Count, excitedly starting up. "You knew Sylvio!"

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"I more than knew him—we were friends. In the regiment he was considered one of us. I have not heard of him for five years: but to judge from your exclamation, Count, you also knew him?"

"Right well. If you were his friend, he must have told you a somewhat singular story——"

"About a blow received at a ball?"

"Yes; and did he tell you who struck him?"

"No." I glanced at the Countess. "It was you, Count?" I said.

"Yes, it was I," exclaimed he, much agitated; "and that picture there is a memento of our last interview."

"Oh, dearest," pleaded the Countess, "do not tell that story. I cannot bear it."

"I must. This gentleman knows how I insulted his friend. Let him now hear how that friend was revenged. I was married," he proceeded, "five years ago. The first month of our honeymoon was spent here. This house holds the happiest and saddest memories of my life. One evening, returning late from a ride, I found before the door a travelling chaise, and was told that a stranger, who had refused to give his name, was awaiting me in my study, having come on business relating to myself alone. I entered, and saw a tall, bearded man, dusty and travel-stained, leaning on the mantelpiece. I stood for a moment, gazing at him.

"'You do not know me, Count?' he asked.

"'Sylvio!' I exclaimed, and confess that my hair stood on end.

"'It is my turn to shoot,' he said; 'are you ready?'

"There was a pistol in his belt. I bowed in recognition of his right, and stood fronting him, only requesting him to shoot at once, before my wife came in.

"'I cannot see clearly,' he said, 'send for lights.'

"This was done, and I returned to my place, again asking him to be quick. He took aim, and I counted the seconds. My thoughts dwelt on my bride; it was a frightful moment. He dropped his hand and remarked:

"'Pity this pistol is charged with a bullet instead of a cherry stone.' Then, after a moment's pause, which seemed a century: 'Truly, I am not in the habit of shooting at a defenceless man; that would be more like a murder than a duel. We will draw lots again, and see who is to shoot first.'

"I think at first I refused, but remember finally loading my pistol. We then wrote our names on slips of paper, and drew lots from the very cap my ball pierced in our first duel. Fortune favoured me again.

"'You are very fortunate, Count,' said Sylvio, with a smile I shall never forget. I know not how it happened, but my ball struck that picture. Sylvio raised his hand and took aim. The expression on his face told me that I had no mercy to expect. At that supreme moment the door opened and Maria rushed in, and with a cry of horror threw her arms round my neck. Her entrance restored my equanimity. Laughing gaily, 'You foolish girl,' I said, 'why are you so frightened? Do you not see it is a joke—a wager? Come, now, go and drink a glass of water, and come back to be introduced to my old friend.'

But she did not believe me.

"'In Heaven's name, sir,' she said, turning to Sylvio, 'is this true? Is it only a wager—a joke?'

"'Of course—oh, of course,' answered he, 'it is only a joke. The Count likes to joke. He once, in joke, struck me a blow; again, in joke, he put a bullet through this cap, and now, of course in joke, he missed killing me for the second time. It is now my turn to joke.' So saying, he levelled the pistol at my breast.

"Maria understood, and cast herself at his feet.

"'Oh, for shame!' I cried; then turning to Sylvio: 'Come, sir, enough of this. Will you shoot—yes or no?'

"'No,' he returned; 'I am satisfied. Twice have I made you shoot at me, and twice have you missed. I have seen your fear, your anguish, your terror. Remember, I leave you to your conscience.'

"He turned towards the door to leave, but wheeling suddenly, almost without an instant's aim, fired and went out. To mark his skill he had put a ball through that picture immediately above mine.

"My wife had fainted. Sylvio passed out unmolested, the servants who saw him go not daring to interfere. He was off before I had recovered my surprise."

The Count was silent.

I had heard the end of a story, in the beginning of which I had been so deeply interested.

The Count had never seen Sylvio again. Later, in 1820, when Alexander Ipsilanti gave the signal for the uprising in Greece, it was surmised that Sylvio was in command of a Greek regiment, and met his death in the battle of Drazachan.

Richard Elsmere.

RESULT OF
JUMBLED PICTURE COMPETITION
NO. I.

The sum of £2 2s. has been forwarded to Miss G. Trotter, care of Mrs. Pendred, "Crohill," Pendennis Road, Streatham, S.W.

The following five have received a bottle of *HOME NOTES BOUQUET*:

C. Puttock, 123, Malvern Road, Kilburn, N.W.

J. M. Child, 4, Cromwell Street, Mount Pleasant, Swansea.

W. F. Fowler, St. John's College, Battersea, S.W.

W. McBeath, 45, West Preston Street, Edinburgh.

Walter Pontin, care of Mrs. Sorey, Stubbington, near Fareham, Hants.

IF YOU WANT

A really bright and interesting paper for Sunday afternoon, which shall at the same time be elevating and instructive, you should go at once to your newsagent and ask him for ***The Sunday Reader.*** This is the biggest, brightest, and best journal for Sunday reading that is published, and it is illustrated profusely throughout by some of the leading black and white artists of the day.

Here are some of the contents of No. 3 of ***The Sunday Reader,*** now ready:

Propitiating the God of Rain; a Strange Ceremony of the Starving Hindoos. - - - - -
A Monument to Horses Killed in Battle. - - -
Moveable Churches in Russia. A Pulpit Made by Boys.
Two Entrancing Short Stories. The Serial. - -
Scores of other Articles and Anecdotes. - -

THE SUNDAY READER.

EVERY THURSDAY. ONE PENNY.

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The Shadow-Hand

By Louis Tracy.

SUMMARY.

Prologue.—The Hon. Ernest Wentworth lies dying at his estate, Chisholme Park. His wife, a light, pleasure-loving creature, falls under the mesmeric influence of Armand Lemaitre, who, by force of will power, compels her to rob her husband. While in the act of extracting a bundle of notes from a bureau she is interrupted by the appearance of her husband, who enters the room in his bed-clothes, silently points at her with his fore-finger, and then falls down dead. She shortly afterwards leaves for Paris to join Lemaitre.

Captain Arthur Musgrave: In love with Edith Wentworth.
Doctor Danton: Armand Lemaitre, a mesmerist, in love with Edith Wentworth.
Professor Queech, Jack Heathcote. } Friends of Musgrave.
Tom Wilson: Servant to Arthur Musgrave.
Hawke: Danton's accomplice.
Edith Wentworth: Daughter of the late Hon. Ernest Wentworth.
Cécile Delisle: A young French girl with detective proclivities.

CHAPTER XII.

How the Debt of Honour was Paid.

Among the clapping of hands on the Grand Stand, as Lancet with her aristocrat-jockey forged past the winning-post a neck in front of Bon-gré, were the hands of Cécile Delisle. She was here with the rest of the house-party of the St. John-Heygates from Giltwood Towers. Wild with excitement, Cécile cried:

"Did I tell you not so? *Tarare!* From the first leap-off I knew the winner. I have gained three thousand pounds!"

Away she went flying down the stairs, across the swarming course towards the weighing-shed, where Musgrave, in the middle of a flushed and jabbering crowd of officers, stood in a long overcoat reaching to his spurred heels, smoking a cigarette.

Jack Lascelles had him by one hand, Evelyn Hardy was shaking off the other with congratulations.

"It's the most heroic piece of fighting that was ever done!" rose the voice of Lascelles above the noise.

"Thank you, my dear boy, but really—oh, confound it! let me go, there's a lady!"

It was Cécile. In a moment Arthur was bowing before her like a palm-tree courtly to the simoon. His face was no longer the "piece of white iron"; its colour had come back freshly, and it wore an amused and rather bored expression.

"I present you all the compliments," said Cécile. "You did that grandly."

"Thank you. I am glad you were not bored."

"I gained three thousand pounds."

"Excellent!"

"I knew you would win. I shall *always* believe in your luck now. You are sublime."

Arthur laughed.

"And you know there was a report that Lancet was hip-strung? Guess who caused it to be put out."

"I can't, really."

She put up her mouth to his ear.

"I!"

At this unblushing avowal of feminine immorality Arthur was pierced with laughter.

"That was naughty," he said, between his spasms.

"Oh, I don't think. Good-bye! Heard from Edith this morning."

She was gone.

Arthur's eyes, following her, fell upon the face of Lemaitre standing near. Lemaitre was looking steadily upon him. As he encountered Arthur's eyes, he beckoned to him with his forefinger.

For one instant Arthur paled to the lips. His life was in this man's hand—this man whom he had just made a beggar.

Lemaitre remained master of the situation. He was Arthur's god. Arthur walked towards that beckoning finger as though it were the summons of doom.

"I received your letter, Captain Musgrave," said Lemaitre; "but did not reply to it, knowing that I should meet you here. I congratulate you on your victory with Lancet. It was rather well done."

"Do you wish to speak to me *now*, on the subject of my letter, Dr. Danton?" said Arthur.

"Yes."

"Then if you will be good enough to follow me, I will lead you to a private room."

Arthur went elbowing a lane through the crowd, followed by Lemaitre. In one of the plank rooms of the saddling shed they sat on two cane-bottomed chairs, alone, facing

It was Cécile.

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each other: both quite placid in manner; both with hatred boiling in their bosoms.

Lemaitre began:

"So you have broken your word, then?"

"Yes."

"That was singular conduct, Captain Musgrave."

"I was drunk, to tell the truth. Drunken men act singularly."

"That is no answer."

"No?"

"Are you now 'engaged' to Miss Wentworth?"

"Practically."

"But so am I."

"That is nothing. She would not marry you. I think not."

"Why?"

"Her affections appear to be given to me."

"We shall see. But as to this conduct of yours, it would look bad—*nasty*—among gentlemen, I think."

"Dr. Danton, you perceive this whip? I shall flog you to the bone if you speak in that tone to me."

Dr. Danton, the chair creaking beneath his weight, smoothed down his imperial, looking up with an amused, open-mouthed speculation at the planking. But his pasty face was somewhat haggard from the ruin which had that day befallen him.

"But you admit," he said, "that your life is mine?"

"Fully," replied Arthur. "But you are not allowed to speak to me as if you were my equal. In spite of my broken pledge, I remain a gentleman, a man of honour. If you forget it, I shall be obliged to flog you again."

"I see." Danton gently stroked his imperial. "What penalty, may I ask, do you anticipate for your broken pledge?"

"It is of no importance what I anticipate. It is for you to direct. I am prepared to obey."

"I think, in honour, you should take your own life," said Danton musingly. "It is hard to expect one man to kill another in cold blood. And there is the chance of detection—afterwards."

"I do not consider that I am bound in honour to take my own life. I have told you so. I refuse to do that. And the danger of detection to you could be reduced to a minimum by a little ingenuity."

"Suppose you live. You must never see Miss Wentworth again."

"Yes, I shall see her—if I live. I am as much bound to her now as I am to you. I can never desert her—if I live."

"So you refuse at least *two* of my directions."

To this point Danton had cunningly and designedly brought the dialogue. Everything that he said was with a purpose. He smoothed his imperial, looking up, musing, speculating. A grand scheme had matured in his brain.

"At least *two* of my directions," he repeated. "And yet you profess to hold yourself at my service."

"*Those* two I refuse," said Arthur. "In any other points I am willing to obey you."

"In *any* other points, you say?"

"Yes."

"But I can't think of any other points. Except I take your life with my own hands."

"Then that you must do."

"'*Must*' is the right word," said Danton. "There remains nothing else. You yourself have pushed me, as you say, 'into a corner.'"

"I am prepared—at whatever time is most convenient to yourself—with whatever weapon you will. My address for some weeks will be The Barracks, Ilminster. Or, I am ready at this moment, if it suits you."

"Very well, Captain Musgrave. I shall write to you. You cannot yourself suggest any other way out of the difficulty?"

"No."

"There is perhaps the pecuniary——"

"So you refuse at least two of my directions."

Arthur burst into a laugh. The idea of *money* occurring to the mind of the man in such a question between gentlemen inexpressibly tickled him. Then, all of a sudden, his laughter ceased, he turned utterly white—sick with hope—with the sudden sweet hope that perhaps he might be able to *purchase* Edith, to purchase happiness, life itself, from this man, with gold coin of the realm.

Danton was looking away from him.

"There is the pecuniary motive," he repeated, "which we have not referred to. It is the only one left."

"Yes—yes," said Arthur, tingling with hope. "Let me hear. I am, you know, a fairly rich man to-day."

"Just so. I won the duel; you the race——"

"Yes, yes; let me hear."

"As you have deprived me of the fruits of my victory at the duel, which I fairly won, perhaps we might compromise, if you repay me with the fruits of your victory at the race, which *you* fairly won."

In an instant, as the words passed Danton's mouth, Arthur was himself again. A new youth seemed to laugh in him, and the burden of a world was lifted from his shoulders.

"Dr. Danton," he said laughing, "you are a sad ruffian, but you are a brilliant genius. I am perfectly at your disposal, and I shall thank you most awfully."

"Stay, Captain, not too fast. Your allusions to my character do not, you see, trouble me. I regard you, believe me, as a mere brainless soldier, beneath the contempt of a serious man of the world. First of all, let me hear how much you are worth at this moment."

"As nearly as possible about £100,000."

"Not more?" Danton glanced sharply at him.

"You see the whip. I shall not fail to use it if you express doubt of my word. You are, really, a frightful ruffian, Danton!" laughed Arthur.

Danton scratched his bald temple a little.

"A £100,000," he said; "that, I take it, represents the amount of your gains to-day?"

"No. I won £50,000 more to-day."

"Are you prepared to part with the £100,000?"

"No. That is not what you proposed. It is no good my purchasing my life if I am to be a beggar. But I am prepared to part with my gains. I don't care a hang for money.

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If your voracious maw can take it all in I will give you £75,000, my win to-day and the money I put up to win it. I think that should satisfy even you."

Danton was looking upward smoothing his imperial with a beatific smile.

"Well," he said, "I do not wish to be hard. It is only a question of when. I am about to leave the country immediately. If you can give me the amount at once I agree."

"I can't, of course, give it you at once. But I dare say I could manage it in a couple of hours."

"How will you give it me?"

"In cheques, notes, and the like."

Danton looked at his watch.

"It is now nearly two. Shall we say four?"

"Very good."

"I am at the Bear Hotel in the town. Will you send me the amount?"

"Yes. And now let us distinctly understand the conditions. I purchase my life from you; and I am henceforth free of the promise to which I bound myself—free to speak to Miss Wentworth, to visit her, to marry her?"

"I agree."

"And you, on your part, cease wholly from the absurd solicitations with which I suspect you have hitherto pestered Miss Wentworth?"

Danton smiled benignly upon him.

"That was no part of my proposal," he said; "why do you drag in that stipulation? I do not at all accept it."

"But you must."

"Why so?"

"I may reconsider my decision, otherwise."

"There is no fear of *that*, I think. And are you so jealous of me?"

"You are a frightful wretch, Danton. Imagine my being jealous of vermin like you."

"Well, the condition you name," said Danton, "is not worth talking over. I agree. I give Miss Wentworth to you. You can have her. I shall never see her again, most likely. You have my benediction."

"At four, then. At the Bear," said Arthur, rising.

"When, by-the-way," said Danton, "will you see Miss Wentworth again?"

"To-morrow. Why?"

"To-morrow! You leave for London to-night, then?"

"No. To-morrow by an early train. Why?"

"Nothing. I wished to know if you would be in Drayton to-morrow in case I wished to see you about any detail. I suspected you would be anxious to hurry to the presence of the lady."

Arthur was gone. The face of Danton wore a broad and beaming smile of beatitude.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Flight from Home.

Danton had to meet Hawke at three at the starter's shed.

From two to three he sat dreamily looking upward where Arthur had left him, as though he had not a care in the world, but immediately before three he was up with a brisk jerk, and walked rapidly forth to the shed.

"I *told* you the darned horse would lose," said Mr. Hawke, coming to meet him in a horsey-looking grey overcoat and soft hat.

"Hold your tongue, Hawke," said Lemaitre.

"Oh, that's all very fine, mate ——"

"Hawke, I think I told you to hold your tongue. You are a lucky man. I have got a job for you."

"But about this horse business ——"

"A job for you. What do you think is the figure you will get?"

"A job? Are you in funds, then, after all?"

Lemaitre winked.

"Good biz!" exclaimed Hawke. "Well, you *are* a one, I must say! A job, is it? I am your man."

"What do you think is the figure?"

"Two thousand?" said tentative Mr. Hawke.

"Say ten," hinted Lemaitre.

Hawke made a twist of joy with his elbow and clenched fist into the air, looking as if he wanted to cut capers.

"When can you let us have it?"

"To-morrow."

"What, not to-day?"

"Some of it to-day. Be at the Bear Hotel, in Drayton at four sharp. And meanwhile—no drink, remember! We have to leave for London to-night."

"I told you the darned horse would lose."

"Oh, I say—not to-night, mate."

"To-night, Hawke."

"Can you let us have a quid now? I'm broke."

Lemaitre handed him a sovereign, turned away, and jumped into a cab.

The first thing he did on reaching the inn was to search the railway-guide for the trains leaving Drayton for London.

He dashed it down with an oath.

"Spoiled! foiled! ruined!" he hissed between his teeth. "Curse the trains!"

He had found that the last train for London left Drayton at five minutes to four, and he was bound to wait till four, or after for the money.

Presently he took up the guide again. At his second glance his face brightened.

"One leaves at six in the morning," he muttered, moving his big, fat finger along the line; "he will not go by that. Flaccid, lackadaisical British officers do not rise at six in the morning. *I* will go by that. The next does not leave till eight. Good! I shall have two hours' start of him. Two hours is the universe. I am safe. But stop! the eight train is an express; the six train is not. I shall *not* have two hours! That is abominable luck. Still—still—we must see! Edith, you are mine, my child!"

Sharp at four Tom Wilson was ushered into the presence of Lemaitre in a private room of the hotel.

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"Hoo am A to know that thoo's t'right man?" said Tom, in his over-cautiousness, though Arthur had described Lemaitre to him.

Lemaitre handed him a card. Tom began fumbling in an inner pocket, and presently drew out a packet bound with elastic.

Lemaitre took a sheet of paper, and began totting up the amounts registered on all varieties of paper-money, as, one by one, he examined the documents.

"It is right," he said at last. "Here is a duly stamped receipt."

"Thank 'oo," said Tom.

"What time does your master leave for London in the morning?" asked Lemaitre.

"He did na' tell me to say," replied Tom.

"That is right," said Lemaitre. "You are a good servant. Never blab too much, my boy. Here's half a sovereign for you. You do not know, for instance, if he is going by the six o'clock train?"

"A know. But he did na' tell me to say. All the gold A want A get from Cécile Delisle, thank 'oo."

"From whom?"

"Cécile Delisle."

"Why, I know that lady—intimately. I am sure she would be so angry at a servant of hers who refused to answer a question which *I* put to him."

"Well, she did na' say that, 'oo see," said Tom. "A will ask her."

Tom turned and walked away.

As soon as he reached Arthur's inn, he sought him out and said:

"T'gent'eman wan'ed to know if you're going by t' six o'clock train, t'morn, sir."

"Did he, Tom?" yawned Arthur. "It is of no importance."

"He seemed gar anxious to know, sir."

"Did he? Very well. Do not trouble yourself, Tom."

The next morning, while it was yet dark, Hawke and Lemaitre stepped into the early train. Arthur and Tom, in a far swifter train, were flying towards London at a few minutes past eight.

It was a mad race—a race far more momentous than the last which Arthur and Lemaitre had run on the course at Drayton Common; a race in which minutes were to decide the fate of several lives.

The two men in the front train knew that they were running it. At every stoppage at a station, Lemaitre groaned inwardly. In the train behind, Arthur lounged with half-closed eyes, which only opened with an occasional flash of interest when he now and then realised that he was about to see her—his life; was about to explain the strangeness of his conduct in constantly shunning her; to clear up the mystery of the statements which Danton had made about him to her.

At the time Lady Hilton had not yet returned from Cannes. The London season was hardly begun. Two days later Cécile was to leave the St. John-Heygates and join Edith at the Hilton town-house at Hyde Park, whither Edith had come in advance, in order to spare Lady Hilton the trouble of making certain domestic rearrangements.

They were half-way to London before Lemaitre explained to Hawke the object of their flight.

"But how are you going to prove it?" said Hawke.

"Hawke, you are a fool," replied Danton. "Can't you guess, without being told, that in that class of life people are not for ever doubting what other people of the same class tell them? They simply accept the facts of which they are informed as true—and they are usually right. Besides, we must *find* proofs."

"*You* find them, then; *I* can't."

"I told you that I knew something of her mother from her own lips. She already has a suspicion that her mother was not all she should have been. And it was my knowledge that she has this suspicion that put the scheme into my head. As she already has the suspicion, it will not be difficult to make her believe that her mother was even worse than she thinks her. You see, Mr. Hawke, you see?"

"But you want some *proof*, mate. Listen to me: I know my way about better'n you. You must have proof. What was the mother's name?"

"Juliet—was it Juliet she told me?—yes, Juliet."

"And what did she look like?"

"I have no idea. But it is of no consequence. She never saw her mother."

"Why, *your* wife was named Juliet, or something similar, wasn't she?"

"Mr. Hawke, be quiet," said Lemaitre.

The train drew up at a station. Lemaitre fidgeted in his seat, and impatiently scratched his temple, crying out at last: "Oh, curse the slow train!"

"But how of these proofs?" said Hawke, when they were once more in motion; "don't go dragging me in anything that you don't see the way out of, mate."

Lemaitre undid his huge fur-lined overcoat, then the undercoat, than the mauve waistcoat, and from an inner pocket of this he drew a small photograph.

"Take this, Hawke," he said, "and show it to her as the portrait of her mother. It isn't unlike herself about the eyes, now I look at it; and it is something tangible—what you call a proof. She will not stop to think that that might be *anybody's* likeness. Young ladies are not old gaol-birds, Mr. Hawke."

While the train was moving Lemaitre continued to speak in this half-playful way, as if utterly unconcerned about anything. The moment it stopped, he was like a restless lion.

Hawke took the photograph and glanced at it.

"Golly! but this here is the portrait of your own old girl, ain't it?"

"Silence! Silence, you elephant!" cried Lemaitre angrily.

"But suppose she's got an old portrait of her mother? *You* don't know, you know," said Hawke.

"It is highly improbable," answered Lemaitre. "We must risk that. For the rest, you must trust to me. I will manage."

When the train drew up at the London terminus, the two men instantly pelted themselves into a cab and drove in the direction of Hyde Park. They had little time to spare. The train, which, with flying shrieks, was sweeping Arthur to the rescue of his beloved, was due in London in half-an-hour's time.

Lemaitre and Hawke alighted before the Hilton mansion overlooking the Park from the east side.

"Is Miss Wentworth at home?" asked Lemaitre of the footman, with hurried breath.

"Yes, sir."

"Give her this card—quick."

It was five precious minutes before Lemaitre was standing in the drawing-room, waiting, waiting, counting the ticks of the clock. Hawke he had asked permission to leave below in the breakfast-room. And, indeed, Mr. Hawke had by no means the physiognomy and appearance of them who frequent the drawing-rooms of Vere de Vere.

Edith sailed in—rather white and scared of face.

"Edith—dear child——" Lemaitre had her hand. "My poor girl—I come to-day an ominous visitor. I have no time to talk. You must nerve yourself to hear something not pleasant—poor—poor—little Edith!"

"What is it? Speak."

She had gone utterly pallid.

"A misfortune—a calamity has befallen me—and you. There is a man—a dreadful being—how can I tell my child?—who claims to be your father——"

"*My* father?"

She tittered a little frightened laugh.

"Yes. And undoubtedly his claim is well-founded. That is the worst of it. He has been seeking you, he says, for five years. A month ago, just as he had discovered your

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whereabouts, and was about to claim you, I ran across him by a series of extraordinary chances. Since then, by means of bribes, threats, cajoleries, I have succeeded in keeping him away from you. But I can no longer control him. To-day he broke from me, and started to come to you. I thought it better to come with him, to break the news to you. Poor Edith—my little child!"

"But," she cried, gazing wildly round, "am I mad? or are you? My father is Ernest Wentworth, brother of Lord Hilton."

"No. Ernest Wentworth was your mother's husband, but not your father. Your mother was not—was not—a correct lady, Edith. You guess how I pity you—pity myself—for you are me—but it is useless to kick against the pricks. You must envisage facts, my poor child The brute below is your father. He has shown me proofs which no mind can resist."

"*Below* you say? He is *here?*" she whispered, a mortal ashen terror overspreading her face.

"Yes. He could not be kept out. But do not be frightened. He is locked into the breakfast-room. My proposal is that you fly with me at once."

"With you?" She repeated the words mechanically after him, without meaning.

"Yes. Or would you care to see your father first, and examine his proofs."

"His proofs?" She repeated the words absently, and stood with open lips, blanched and dry, all stunned and powerless.

"Will you see him? He is your father, you know."

"My father — I know?"

"Come, Edith—dear—collect yourself — one minute," he said, frowning deeply upon her with his old intense frown. "He is your father. Will you see him?"

"Yes—if he is my father—I will see him," she said in a sort of trance.

Lemaitre touched a bell.

"Show the stranger up here," he said to the footman.

Edith stood with open, white lips, amazed and stupid.

Hawke's broad mass rolled into the room.

"Oh, not he!" burst in a shrill shriek from Edith.

"None of that!" said Hawke in a deep bass of paternal authority. "Learn to respect your parents, or I'll teach ye! Do you know this?"

Edith had backed in shrinking panic to the furthest corner of the room. Hawke, step by step, followed her, holding before her the photograph of Julie Lemaitre.

"You know this—yes or no?"

The hard heart of Lemaitre could not bear to witness this awful scene. He had walked out of the room, and stood waiting in the corridor outside.

"Why don't you answer me? Don't you know the face of yer own mother?"

Edith glanced at it, cringing in her corner.

"Yes," came in a faint whisper from her.

"You do know it?" asked Hawke, surprised.

"Yes."

"You have a photo of her, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've come for yer. You b'long to me. Will you come?"

"Oh!—call Dr. Danton for me—will you, like a good—a good father? Call him for me—pray—he has deserted—he has left me——"

Her voice broke down in a long wail.

"Here, Doctor!" called Hawke in a harsh voice.

"You know this—yes or no?"

Danton came in hurriedly, and Hawke retired.

Edith put her hand on Danton's shoulders.

"Oh, save me from him!" she whispered—"save me!—see if you can get him down again—pray do! Take me away—I will go with you—anywhere——"

"Now, look here, my man," said Danton roughly to Hawke, "you will have to wait, and behave yourself. You will make your daughter ill. Go downstairs for a while."

Hawke rolled away, and left the two together.

"Now," said Danton, "while he is in the breakfast-room we shall be able to slip out. I promise you to rid you of him for ever. Go—put on your hat quickly. I will wait here."

She cast a scared glance at him, a hunted dismay in her face, like the hopelessness of a deer surrounded by hounds. She ran from the room, flew up to her chamber, put on a hat and cloak, covered her face with a thick veil, and threw the contents of her jewel-box in a pocket. She seemed now, once freed from the proximity of Lemaitre, to have acquired an intense collectedness of mind. She forgot nothing; she took her purse, a small travelling-bag with a few things crammed into it. Then she sat at a desk and scribbled three notes—one to Arthur, one to Cécile, one to Lady Hilton, three lines each to each, in the same words:

I am gone for ever. I am not what you think me. I am no fit companion for you and yours. Do not try to follow.

Love! love! from Edith.

She enclosed and directed the three notes, then slipped quietly down the stairs, out into the garden at the back, out by a gate in the garden wall to a small lane, out from this to crowded Piccadilly, and into a passing cab. She drove away towards Victoria.

Lemaitre was waiting with feverish anxiety for her in the drawing-room, Hawke in the breakfast-room.

At this time Arthur had arrived in London, and, with

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Slipped out by a gate in the garden wall.

Tom Wilson, was driving westward in a cab. A strong impatience to be with Edith had seized upon him, and the horse was tearing through the streets.

Lemaitre looked at his watch in a madness of uneasiness as the time dragged bitterly on. He saw that his half hour of grace was gone. What should he do? He rang, and sent the servant post haste to look for Edith.

"Say that one minute more will be all too late!" he hissed with distorted face.

The servant was away more than two minutes, and returned with astonished face. She found Lemaitre nearly frantic.

"Miss Wentworth is certainly not in the house, sir," she said. "I have looked for her everywhere."

With a gurgled oath, Lemaitre dashed down the steps. He wanted no more duels in England. He looked in at the breakfast-room an instant with a "Come, you ass!" and hurried by the astonished footman through the front door.

As Arthur drove up to the door, Tom Wilson caught sight of Lemaitre's broad spread of back hastening away some distance to the north. Hawke had gone another way.

"There's the Frenchman who wanted to know what train 'oo left by, sir," said Tom.

Arthur glanced and saw him. In a moment he was inside the house.

"Miss Wentworth seems to have gone out, sir," a servant said.

"Vile luck, that's all," said Arthur. He returned to his cab, and drove to his hotel.

He thought that Edith had gone out for an hour or two. The apparition of Danton suggested nothing to him.

Within twenty minutes from the time Edith had left the house, Lady Hilton arrived. She was expected, and was astonished at the absence of Edith. Looking about in much wonderment, she found the three notes on the *escritoire* in Edith's boudoir.

The old lady fainted in the arms of a maid.

Half-an-hour later she opened her eyes, and sat up in the bed, an eager straining look in her eyes.

"My child! my child——" she moaned. Then, stretching out her arms in wild appeal:

"Oh, Cécile! Cécile! if you were only here to get me back my child!"

(*To be continued.*)

TELEPHONE COMPETITION.—*The following is the attempt sent in by winner, whose name appeared last week:*

Bur-r-r-r-r-r.

"Are you there? Number 46,532, please. Hurry up."

Bur-r-r-r-r-r.

"Ah! That you, Charlie?"

"*Yes, who are you?*"

"Jack."

"*Just the fellow I want to see. How do you feel after last night?*"

"First-rate, thanks."

"*I wish I did. I'm in the deuce of a scrape.*"

"No; really?"

"*Fact. It's all through that beastly ball.*"

"Oh, I say, you had it pretty hot last night, old man, didn't you?"

"*Never such a fool in my life, I'm in danger of an action for breach. I'm afraid——*"

"Eh, what?"

"*It's a fact. I actually proposed, and you know I am engaged to the dearest little girl in the world.*"

"By Jove! I'm glad it wasn't me. Tell me all about it."

"*She didn't come in till late, and I don't think you saw her. A fetching little woman in red.*"

"No, I didn't; I got home fairly early."

"*Wish I'd gone with you. She quite turned my head.*"

"Poor beggar, I pity you; go on."

"*Well, we danced once, and then sat out all the rest.*"

"Good gracious! You don't say so!"

"*Fact. And the champagne was heady and—and she was so pretty and—well, before we parted we got quite confidential.*"

"What in the world did you say? I hope to goodness you——"

"*I talked no end of nonsense, and you'll have to get me out of the scrape. You see I gave her one of your cards instead of my own.*"

"Great Scott! whatever shall I do. She'll, she'll——"

"*Oh, no she won't, for when she saw the card she went into fits of laughter, and called me an imposter. I ought to have remembered that she heard my name when we were introduced. I got out of it by saying you were my dearest friend, and a perfect Don Juan.*"

"Hang you! What a fool you are."

"*Not a bit, she wasn't the sort to be shocked, and directly she heard the character I gave you she said she'd call upon you, just as I knew she would. When she does so you must tell her I have been called away to Jericho or Timbuctoo. By-the-bye, of course your wife hasn't got home yet from her mother's?*"

"No, no, not yet."

"*Then it's all right. You are just the man to console her for my absence. You admire little women, don't you?*"

"Yes."

"*Well, then she's just your style, and the task won't be difficult, for I rather think in spite of all that she's married.*"

"Well, you are——"

"*Nonsense. It was only a lark and she's a fearful flirt. She told me her name was Nellie Brown, but the letters on her bangle were N. J., and I fancy I heard the hostess call her Mrs. Joncs. I shouldn't like to be her husband, and, by Jove, I feel so sorry for him that I'm half inclined to think I behaved badly.*"

"You did."

"*I don't know. She deserved it, and her husband ought to look after her better. I don't think I did him such a very bad turn.*"

"But I say you did."

"*Oh, it's all very well for you to be a St. Anthony. You don't know what a syren she is. Black eyes, black hair——*"

"Oh, be quiet."

"*What's the matter? Good gracious. Your name's Joncs? You don't mean to say——?*"

"I do, and I never want to hear of you again."

"*Oh, Lord—upon my word, old fellow—I'm very sorry—but—*"

"Oh, you——"

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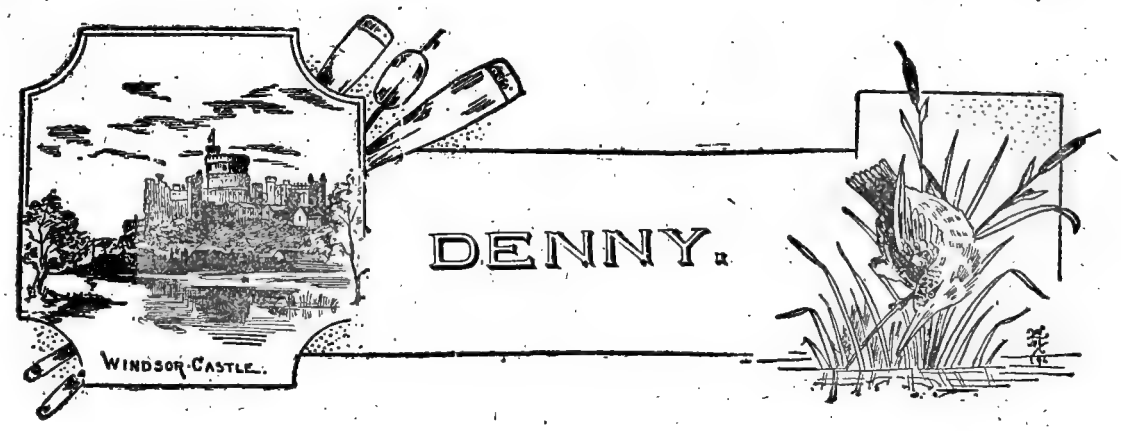

DENNY.

The incident was told to me years ago, when I was second assistant engineer with the Golden Crown Mining Company at Red Dog. At the time it raised by several notches, in my opinion, those rough miners with whom I was so constantly associated; and in later years I have often recalled it when the course of events has brought me face to face with the hypocrisy of a large city.

It was told me the eve before St. Patrick's Day, for I remember having started for a ball given by the Irish element. The night was clear and cold, but the wind was so sharp that I was chilled through, and stopped at the Traveller's Rest for a warming glass of stimulant.

I pushed the door open—the old bullet-scarred door with its heavy hinges—and entered the bar-room. The usual crowd was not in evidence, and of the five occupants, four were in the act of taking their departure. They carried their shovels with them, and as they passed me and went out on the windy street they wished me a good evening. The door closed behind them and I was left alone with Parson Sam.

I walked to the big stove, and while warming my hands asked if the boys were going that night.

Sam pulled at his pipe, and replied, "No."

I remarked the fact that they had their shovels with them, and asked for what use they were intended. Sam took the pipe from his mouth, expectorated in the direction of the base of the bar, and replied:

"Goin' to give Denny an airin'."

"And what is the matter with Denny? Where is he?" I asked.

"Nothin' at present," he replied; "he's in the cemetery on the hill."

"Dead?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied.

"And who was Denny?"

A look of surprise came over his face as he asked:

"You haven't heard of Denny, Mr. Hopkins?" and then, after a moment's pause, he added: "Well, maybe that ain't so strange, after all. You've only been in Red Dog some six or eight months, and Denny died just five years ago, comin' to-morrow."

"And why do they remember him so well now?" I asked.

Sam removed his arm from the back of his chair, rested his elbows on his knees, and, gazing through the open door of the stove at the flickering flames, told me the story of Denny:

"You see, Denny was sorter mild like, awfully gentle and quiet spoken, you know, so the boys didn't pay much attention to him, 'cept when they were in bad humour, and wanted someone to take it out on. He took it all in a quiet, good-natured sort of way, never thinkin' of hittin' back, so we all thought he didn't have no sand. At least that's what we thought until that St. Patrick's Day about which I'm tellin' you.

"There was a good deal of drinkin' goin' on the night before, and four patriotic Irishmen kept it up until they were regular blind. They were a sorry lot when they showed up for work the next day, and the boss gave them a regular rakin' down.

"That mornin' was the first time I ever saw Denny show any temper. He was mad clear through at the thought of workin' on St. Patrick's Day, and refused to take his pick out of the tool shed. When the boss comes up to him and asks what's the matter, Denny just points to the green ribbon pinned on the front of his shirt, and says: 'It's St. Patrick's Day, and I don't work.'

"Any other man would have been given his walkin' papers as quick as shootin', but, somehow or other, the boss always made an allowance for Denny.

"'But we can't stop work, Denny,' he says.

"Denny stood sort of stubborn-like and replied: 'Well, you oughter have some sort of celebration, or, at least, run up a green flag over the office.'

"The boss was for humourin' him, and says: 'And we are goin' to celebrate. At ten o'clock we be a-goin' to fire off a blast in honour of old St. Pat that will blow all the snakes out of Ireland.'

"'At ten?' says Denny.

"'Yes, at ten,' replied the boss.

"That sort of satisfied him. Without another word he seized his pick and went after the boys, a-singin' some Irish song.

"The boss wasn't jokin', for just about the time he said, he called for all hands to leave work, and the engineer came in, and placed the dynamite cartridge and the machine for settin' it off.

"We all got at a safe distance, and stood there awaitin' the explosion. Denny was almost beside himself with delight, and steppin' out a little in advance, he called out for his pal, Jim, to join him, and see the snakes

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come wrigglin' out of the shaft. But Jim didn't answer, for he wasn't there.

"The engineer, who was a-holdin' his watch, seein' that things went off in time, turned round when he heard this, and got awful white. It didn't take no time for us to find we were four short, and them four the ones that had been so drunk the night before. Not a man spoke, 'cept the engineer, and he just said: 'good Heavens!' We all knew them fellows were still in the mine.

"Then it was that Denny made the sixty of us out to be cowards, and him a hero. Without a word he ducked his head atween his shoulders, and set off for the shaft as fast as his legs could carry him, the green ribbon a-flutterin' over his shoulder.

"One or two of us made a move as if to follow him, but the engineer threw out his arm to stop us, and his voice sounded mighty strange when he yelled: 'It's death—forty seconds.'

"We all knew then that the cartridge would go off in forty seconds, and that we had seen the last of Denny. It sort of paralysed the boys, and they just stood round like so many statues.

"To me it seemed as if there was something closin' in on all sides of me—a sort of interferin' with my breathin'—and for the life of me I couldn't take my eyes off the engineer as he stood there holdin' his watch. He was as white as a piece o' paper, and the moisture was runnin' down his face just like it was mid-summer.

"Forty seconds ain't much, Mr. Hopkins, but it seemed like a year to me. I was just beginnin' to think that maybe Denny had got there in time after all, when the engineer let go his watch, and sort o' slipped down, prayin' like. The time was up, and the cartridge exploded.

"They say that drunken men has luck, and I reckon it's so, for them four drunken Irishmen weren't hurt at all. They were lyin' flat in the side tunnel when the cartridge went off, and aside from bein' nearly smothered, got off without a scratch. But it wasn't that way with Denny. He must have been right by the machine when the explosion took place, for he was all sort o' caved in, and his green ribbon was as black as a piece of coal.

"Men had been killed in the mines afore, but never like this, and for the first time there was a complete shut-down—all in the honour of Denny. He had the biggest funeral that ever took place in Red Dog.

"We all felt as though we should like to do somethin' for him, for you see we hadn't treated him just right when he was with us; but we didn't know just what to do, until the engineer purposed that we plant grass on his grave. There wasn't no grass in the graveyard, you know, and we thought it would please him to have somethin' green growin' over him. You see, it was green he was a-wearin' when he died tryin' to save the boys.

"So we had the engineer sent to Chicago for the best grass seed that could be had, and when spring arrived we hauled dirt from the valley and planted it.

"Ever since then, on the night before St. Patrick's Day, a committee—one man from each workin' gang—goes up and shovels away the snow and makes things ship-shape. So when the sun comes a-peepin' and a-smilin' over Balden's Ridge, a-lightin' up St. Patrick's Day, there'll be one little spot of green in the big white wilderness, and the ribbons will be a-flutterin' from the stakes as mark out Denny's claim.

"That's what the boys be a-doin' now."

LANDIS MILLS.

AN EASY WAY TO EARN A WATCH.

On March 4th we wound up a watch and placed it in a safe. It was wound up somewhere between the hours of four and six in the afternoon. It is supposed to run down in about thirty-six hours. If you want this watch, which is a superior article, manufactured by **Mr. HENRY E. PECK, of 71, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.**, and sold by him at five guineas, all you have to do is to mark the time at which you think it will stop on the clock face herewith, and on the line left for that purpose. You may make any number of attempts for this prize, but each one must be on a separate clock-face.

It is an English Lever Watch, ¾-plate movement, jewelled in eight holes, chronometer balance, plain or engine-turned cases, crystal glass, and five years' warranty is given with each watch.

The prize will be awarded to the competitor who draws the hands pointing most nearly to the hour and minute at which it is found the watch in our safe has stopped. To prevent mistakes, put the time also on the space provided.

There is no entrance fee required, but no competition will be accepted unless traced on the diagram herewith.

In the unlikely event of two competitors being correct, the watch will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt first reaches this office.

Competition closes ***Monday, March 22nd.*** Address attempts:

"WATCH" ***Short Stories,*** PEARSON'S BUILDINGS, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

Hour..... *Minute*.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

All Competitions must be sent through the Post.

RESULT OF THE FIRST COMPETITION WILL APPEAR NEXT WEEK.

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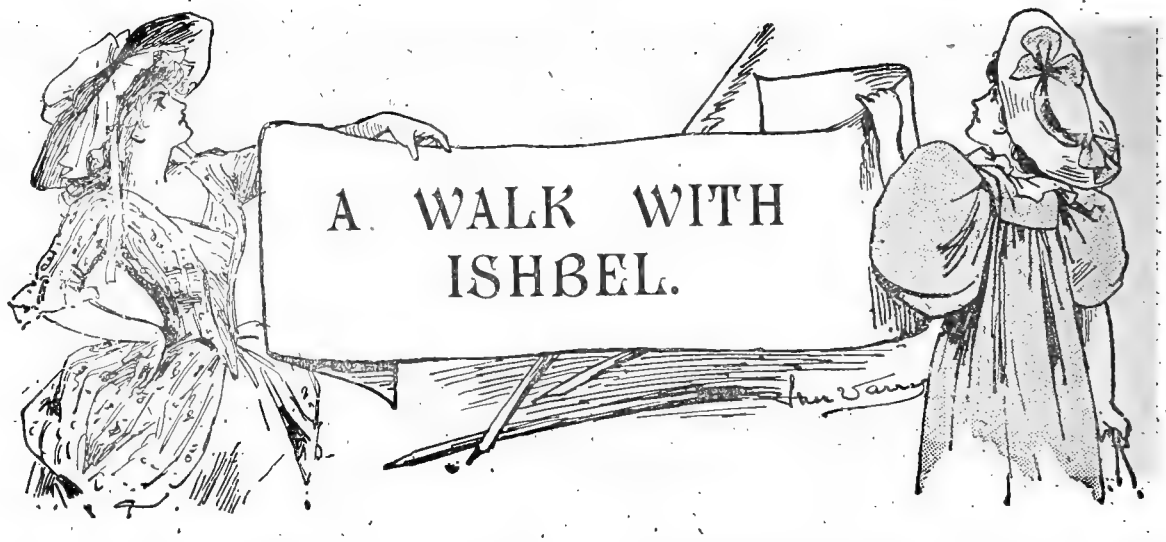

A WALK WITH ISHBEL.

"I DON'T mind talking to you, you know," said Ishbel—she insists on being spelt that way—"because you're not a stupid boy, and you have a nice, detached point of view; but you must promise when I tell you things not to imagine I mean myself."

"How could I imagine you a thing?" I asked reproachfully.

"You know what I mean," said Ishbel with severity. "When I was quite young," she pursued—she is twenty-two—"I used to fancy that authors put themselves into their stories. Now I know they never do."

"Well, *I* am not quite young," I said crossly. "Go on."

"But you didn't promise."

"I promise."

Ishbel adjusted her hat-pin. "Once there was a girl," she began, "who, at the age of seventeen, was sent to Scotland to visit her father's people. That's rather a nice beginning, isn't it?" she interrupted herself. "It sounds as if it might be print. Do you think if you saw a story with a beginning like that you would read it?"

"Candidly?"

"Of course."

"I don't think I should."

There was a dangerous glitter in her eye.

"But," I hastened to add, "reading a story is very different to having you tell it, you know. I could listen to you for a thousand years."

She was mollified. "It won't take that long," she assured me with a smile. There is no word for her smile but delicious.

"Do go on," I said. "Did she like the people?"

"Well, some of them," doubtfully. "You see they were Scotch and she was English."

"Yes."

"And—and young, and they bullied her a little. The next time"—with animation—"I mean—when I go, I don't think they'll bully me."

"I don't fancy they will."

"And so, you see, she didn't have as good a time as she might exactly. But she did have a love affair."

"Oh," said I.

"Yes," said Ishbel, poking the ground with her parasol, "with a detrimental."

"Oh," said I again.

"Yes," said Ishbel. "He was a sort of distant connection of hers, a solicitor, you know. He—he said he was very much in love—and so was she."

"Confound——" I begun.

"I beg your pardon!" said Ishbel.

"I mean," I said sternly, "it is very wrong of detrimentals to make love to girls."

"It is," agreed Ishbel. "But he was very—oh, very honourable. Things had gone, well, they had gone rather far, you know, but the week before she returned,

She had a love affair.

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when he proposed—at least, he didn't exactly propose, but he told her he had only three hundred a year, and that, of course, it was out of the question to marry on that, and he couldn't bear the idea of hampering her with a long engagement, and—what did you say?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Are you sure? You put me out. Well, he said she must not be engaged to him, but he would hold himself engaged to her, and some day when the senior partner dropped off—I do wish," petulantly, "you wouldn't mutter like that!"

I grovelled.

"Where was I?" demanded Ishbel. "Oh, well, then they said good-bye, you know, and she was perfectly miserable—if you look so horribly cross I shall send you home—oh, dreadfully miserable! She felt that she didn't care a straw about other men. Balls and parties had no attraction for her, and fancy, for ever so long she hardly took any interest in her frocks! Oh, it was horrid! She only lived for his letters—and somehow they—well, they were not exactly satisfactory. She supposed it was because he was so very honourable, and they were not exactly engaged, you know. But one day she thought it all over, and decided that sort of thing would have to come to an end. She knew she would never be really happy for a moment till he came, as she knew he would some day, to claim her; but she made up her mind to stop thinking about him as much as possible, and to be a little nice to other men, and try to seem happy, no matter how perfectly miserable she was in reality. The idea was, you see—I think she got it out of a poem—to lock his image up in her heart."

"I see," said I. "And how did it work?"

"It worked very well," said Ishbel reflectively. "She knew she was wretched, but she didn't allow herself to think about it."

"And what happened?" I asked briskly.

"Well, after three years he came."

"Oh! he did!"

"Of course!" said Ishbel sharply. "Did you imagine he didn't?"

I coughed. "And she unlocked her heart?" I enquired.

"Yes," said Ishbel.

"And the image?"

"It's a very odd thing," replied Ishbel slowly, "but it wasn't there!"

I coughed again. "Was her heart—did she find the receptacle—er—empty?" I asked.

"She didn't tell me that," said Ishbel.

We walked on.

"So that," I remarked presently, "was the reason why that long-legged Scotch fellow——"

"But you promised!" cried Ishbel.

A. G. Warwick.

The Incendiary.

I.

Born on Saffron Hill, her mother English, her father an Italian, handed over for a consideration to a *padrone* when seven years old, married at eighteen to a brute, Lucrezia Batti could scarcely be expected to develop angelic attributes. This is the story of her career:

When a compatriot stabbed her ruffianly husband to death in a drunken brawl, Mrs Batti was left with a couple of wheezy organs, a small quantity of battered furniture, and a two-year-old daughter. The funeral expenses swallowed up the organs; her landlord seized all the furniture of any value for rent. Not being strong enough to drag a heavy organ about, even if she had been able to hire one, she and her little Lucia soon found themselves face to face with starvation. In searching a broken desk which had belonged to the murdered man, she came across a document, partly printed, with a red stamp in the left-hand corner, and "£100" written very large, in the right. Hopefully she carried it to Moses Levi.

"I can't lend nodings on dis," he said, a grin of amusement wrinkling his yellow face. "It's an insurance policy—of no value votefers at present. If your 'ouse vas to gatch fire," he went on, "den you could claim money for all dot vas lost and a few tings perhaps dot you nefer had. Dot's vat de paper's for. Idt's a goot shance for a poor woman."

Mrs. Batti began to understand.

"Then if my sticks was burnt," she rejoined eagerly, "and I claimed twenty pounds, would they pay it?" Twenty shillings would have been an excessive valuation of the little furniture her landlord had left behind, but she did not tell the Jew that.

"Perhaps," he replied, with a knowing wink, "I tells you vot—if you brings me dot paper and agrees to pay me fifty per shent, most likely I'll get you t'irty pounds. You can't get noddings yourself, because you don't know the vay. But I warns you—if dey find out you set de place afire, you gets six monts."

Mrs. Batti understood.

"Do many do it?" she asked.

"Hundreds. Idt's a goot business."

When the reckless woman reached her miserable home.

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little Lucia was crying for food. Few mothers can stand that test and remain honest in thought and deed, even when they have been brought up in a strictly moral atmosphere. Mrs. Batti stole a pair of boots from a shop door, pawned them for two shillings, and bought a loaf. The theft might be extenuated; she had not a penny. But she expended the balance in naptha, and that night the wretched home in which she dwelt was gutted, and the broken, unsaleable furniture wholly destroyed by fire.

Early in the morning, before her tempter, Moses Levi, had opened his shop, she was arrested and charged with arson. Little Lucia was taken from her and sent to the workhouse. The Jew trembled in his dirty carpet slippers when her trial came on, but he was quite safe. His name was not mentioned. The jury found Lucrezia Batti guilty, and the judge sentenced her to twelve month's imprisonment.

II.

In gaol her conduct was almost as bad as it could be. "Give me my child!" she cried, when bidden to perform her allotted task. "I won't do a stroke till you bring me my Lucia!" Starvation and the dark cell were tried in vain. She remained rebellious to the end of her time.

When set free she walked to the workhouse and demanded her child. Lucia, pale and fragile, with black eyes that seemed at least two sizes too large for her small head, was brought to her. She took her in her arms and pressed her to her bosom, cried and laughed over her by turns, nearly suffocating her with kisses. In savage natures, such as hers, the maternal instinct is often strongly developed. Presently the pair set out for the old neighbourhood, where the newly-released prisoner hoped to meet a *padrone* who would let her have an organ. She did not succeed. Night found little Lucia again crying for food, and her mother, who had not earned the customary prison pittance, half frantic. Lucrezia Batti's evil genius impelled her to visit Levi's shop. The Jew stood at the door.

"I never said a word," she whispered. "Give me something to buy bread."

Levi was not benevolent by nature, but gratitude, or something else, prompted him to present her with a shilling.

"I vas glad you did not shplit," he muttered. "Idt proved dat you can be trusted. Come in. I vant to talk."

He led the way to an evil-smelling parlour behind his shop and bade her sit down.

"Idt vas vant of egsperience," he resumed. "S'elp me, it vas! You know nodt de safe vay. Now I tells you——" sinking his voice to a whisper. "You makes a rope of paper dot reaches all oop de shtairs, a t'ick, loose rope. You soaks dot rope in naptha, and you ties a fuse to de bottom end. De oder end you carries oop to de garret. Den you lights de fuse and goes away. Dot does de trick. De shtaircase ish a flue: de ashes of dot rope are blowed away, and nobody knows how it vas done."

"What's the use of telling me that?" she rejoined. "I want to know how I can keep my child."

For the space of half a minute the Jew watched her without speaking.

"I tells you," he said at length. "A frent of mine will give five pounds to anybody dot vill burn down his shop agsidentally. Five pounds ish a lot of money. Mit five pounds you could furnish a room for de liddle von and keep her mit you till you gets anoder job."

Mrs. Batti did not hesitate a moment. "I'll do it!" she cried. "Tell me where——"

"Not so fast," interrupted Levi. "Dis business must nodt be done in dot hurry. I must talk to mine frent."

He gave her another shilling, and she went away with Lucia. Two nights afterwards there was a great fire in the neighbourhood of Houndsditch. No suspicion attached to anyone, and the insurance was paid. But an epidemic of fires set in with characteristics so similar that the insurance companies were convinced of foul play. Consultations took place, and in the end Tonio Batti's widow was caught again. Journals announced the fact in the biggest and blackest type: "Capture of an incendiary." But this time Mrs. Batti had a companion in the dock—the proprietor of the premises she had burnt down. Eighteen months' hard labour was the sentence passed on both.

The incendiary, however, was not now penniless. Her solicitor advertised for a respectable woman to take charge of Lucia. A Mrs. Cuthbert replied, and had an interview with the child's mother before the latter was sentenced, with the result that Lucia went to reside with her at Camberwell.

III.

The eighteen months passed, and a desperate woman—a human tigress, destitute of pity, except for her own offspring—was let loose upon society. She hastened, almost flew, to Camberwell. The house Mrs. Cuthbert had occupied was vacant—to be let. The neighbours knew the little "furrin kiddy" well enough, but no one was able to tell the mother whither Mrs. Cuthbert had removed.

"I reckon her got fond o' the child," one woman said, "and her was afeared you'd take her away when you come out. Her said as much, missus, and that's all as I knows."

Mrs. Batti raged, threatening awful things. When she grew calmer she inserted advertisements in various newspapers. No success attended this course, she consulted a private detective, who speedily drained her of the little money she had left. Continue the search she could not without means, so once more she visited Moses Levi, and this time for employment.

The Jew shook his head. "Too risky," he said. "De bolice know you are out. If dere's a fire you'll be arrested on suspicion. Bedder lie low a few monts."

"I should go mad," rejoined the desperate woman. "Besides, the risk is my affair. You don't run any."

"Dot's true. Vell, I vill see two or t'ree clients and find out how t'ings are mit them."

In his business capacity, Levi had a large number of acquaintances, all more or less permanent residents in Queen Street, many of them in terrible straits.

Mrs. Batti went away and returned the following morning.

"Well?" she said.

"Dere ish some business," replied the Jew, in a wary whisper, "but idt's dangerous. Idt's a lock-up shop mit two families living ofer. If anybody was burnt and you vas caught, idt vould be a hanging matter."

"That's my look out," was the curt rejoinder.

"But idt's my frent's ash vell. I tells you vot," the Jew went on after a pause, "you can do idt and rouse de peoples oop ven de fire ish vell on. If you vas to discover de fire de bolice vould nefer sospect dot you had a hand in idt."

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Mrs. Batti nodded. "Where is the place?" she asked briefly.

"No. 6, Ellaby Street—a tobaconnist's shop. Mishder Green ish de proprietor."

"Where can I see him?"

"Here. At eight o'clock."

At the hour named, Levi introduced the woman to a pale-faced, haggard man of forty, or thereabouts, who seemed in a de perately nervous state. It was clear that he did not like the business at all, but his financial difficulties drove him on. All arrangements were made at Levi's. He explained that it was Mr. Green's custom to shut up his shop at eleven o'clock every night and go home to Bloomsbury; he suggested that Mrs. Batti should call at a quarter to that hour and make her preparations, which would only occupy a few minutes. As soon as the fuse had been ignited, she would leave, and the tobacconist would follow almost immediately. When sufficient time had elapsed for the shop to get well alight it was arranged that the incendiary should return and raise an alarm. Having arrived at this understanding the conspirators separated.

IV.

The plot was carried out. Mrs. Batti lit the makeshift fuse and hastened away. Twenty minutes afterwards she returned. The inflammable stock was blazing. The shop was a fiery furnace. But passers-by were few at that hour, and no one had observed the flames.

"Fire! Fire!" she shouted, at the top of her shrill voice. A boy took up the cry. The policeman on point duty at the street corner blew his whistle and ran up, while the officer hammered at the side entrance with his baton, a man threw stones at the bedroom windows. A boisterous, excited crowd collected as by magic. Over all the uproar rang the piercing cry: "Fire! Fire!"

At last a window was opened. A man looked out.

"What's up?" he shouted.

"Your place is on fire!" roared the constable. "Rouse all the inmates and get out as quickly as you can!"

The man disappeared. As the flames burst through the shutters and the first floor casements, the officer ran off to summon the fire brigade. A moment afterwards the street door opened, and a man rushed out, carrying a child, followed by a woman in her nightdress, similarly burdened. Presently another woman, sobbing hysterically, came out, and then an old man, half clad, with garments smoking. A bystander took off his coat and extinguished the smouldering flames.

"Are you all out?" shouted the constable, who had returned.

The hysterical woman looked about her.

"Yes, yes; I think so," she answered, and fell in a faint at the incendiary's feet. Mrs. Batti was about to slink away. She paused and bent over the fainting woman. A wild cry of terror and dismay burst from her lips. Then she cried:

"It's Mrs. Cuthbert."

"That's her name," said the old man, who was on his knees. "Help me to lift her."

For answer she seized him by the hair and shook him frantically.

"Lucia. Where is Lucia Batti?" she screamed.

The old fellow did not answer immediately. He gazed about him in a bewildering manner, without rising.

"Good Heavens. She's forgot," he cried at last. "She's asleep in the second floor back, and the stairs are afire."

With another scream such as a tigress fighting for her whelps might utter, the incendiary burst through the crowd and dashed into the burning building, just as an engine drove up and the men sprang to the ground.

"After that woman. Fetch her back!" yelled the chief, and two brave fellows plunged through the smoke into the passage that led to the staircase. But the flames drove them out, scorched and half-blinded.

"The stairs are alight from top to bottom, but she has gone up!" shouted one. "Where's the escape?"

There was no witness to that wretched criminal's desperate battle with the fiend she had aroused, and it cannot be described. But her feelings may be imagined. If Lucia died, then she, her mother, would be her murderess—she who, to provide means to recover the only creature she loved, had not only endangered the lives of others, but would have doomed that loved one to the most awful of all deaths.

Before the escape arrived she was seen at a window on the second floor.

A cry of warning had scarcely been uttered when the glass crashed out and fell to the pavement. Smoke and flames burst after it—a fiery cloud, surrounding and enveloping the figure of a woman, who held in her blackened, scorched arms, something wrapped in a blanket.

"Catch!" she screamed hoarsely.

A hundred hands were uplifted. The bundle dropped and was caught safely, its contents, little Lucia, wholly unharmed. Then the straining watchers saw the woman reel back and disappear. The next instant the roof of the old building fell in, and a shower of sparks shot up towards the sky.

"God have mercy on her soul!" said a fireman reverently. "She was a good plucky 'un, and deserved a better fate."

There is little to add. The remains, when discovered, were charred beyond identification. Neither Mrs. Cuthbert nor her husband doubted that the woman who had given her life for little Lucia's was the child's mother, but fearing to lose their charge they said nothing at the time. Of course, Moses Levi took care not to come forward as a witness at the inquest. So what remained of the incendiary was consigned to an unnamed grave.

Helen Mannsch.

A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.

On page 379 several sketches are given in their proper order. £2 is offered to the reader who sends us the most appropriate wording to go under each sketch, the whole to form a story descriptive of the illustrations, and a bottle of Home Notes Bouquet will be given to each of the senders of the next best five attempts.

It is not necessary for competitors to have any literary ability. If you have a good idea, surely there should be no difficulty in putting it down in words. The whole of the story is limited to one hundred words, which may be distributed under the sketches according to the judgment of the competitor.

All that you have to do is to write in the order of the sketches the wording that you think most appropriate, enclose your attempt in an envelope (which should be marked "Picture Story"), and forward it to this office before Monday, March 22nd.

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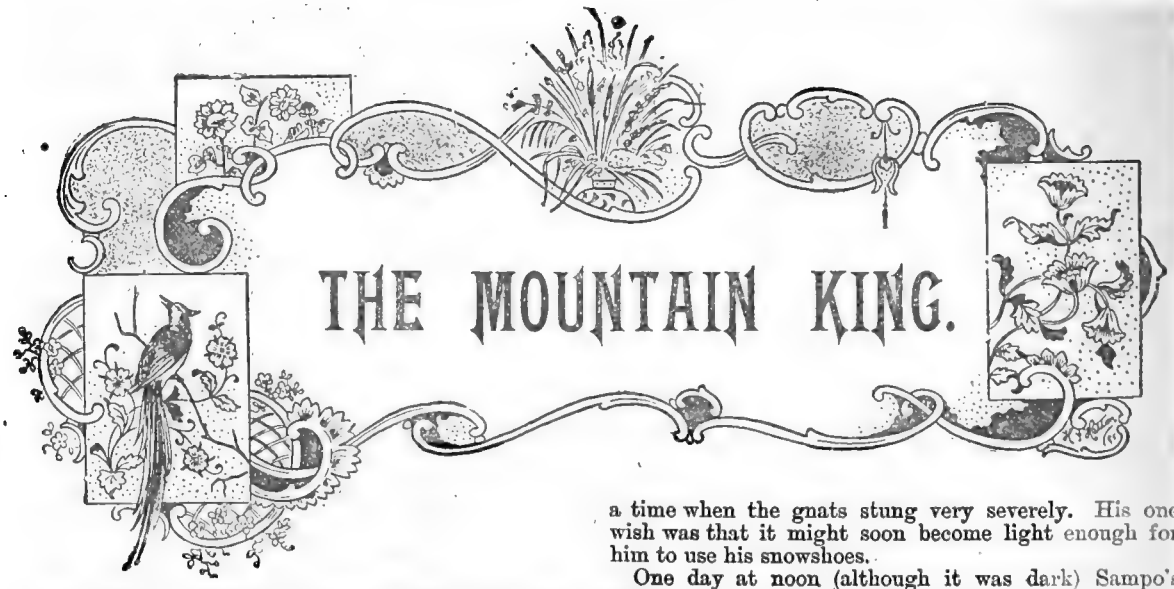

THE MOUNTAIN KING.

Far away in Lapland, at a place called Aïmïo, near the river Jana, there lived in a little hut a Laplander and his wife, with their small son, Sampo.

Sampo Lappelill was now between seven and eight years of age. He had black hair, brown eyes, a snub nose, and a wide mouth, which last is considered a mark of beauty in curious Lapland. Sampo was a strong child for his age; he delighted to dance down the hills in his little snowshoes, and to drive his own reindeer in his own little sledge. The snow whirled about him as he passed through the deep drifts, until nothing of him could be seen except the tuft of his black forelock.

"I shall never feel comfortable while he is from home," said the mother. "He may meet Hisü's reindeer with the golden antlers."

Sampo overheard these words, and wondered what reindeer it could be that had golden antlers. "It must be a splendid animal," said he. "How much I should like to drive to Rastekaïs with it!" Rastekaïs is a high, dreary mountain, and can be seen from Aïmïo, from which it is five or six miles distant.

"You audacious boy!" exclaimed the mother. "How dare you talk so? Rastekaïs is the home of the trolls, and Hisü dwells there also."

"Who is Hisü?" enquired Sampo.

"What ears that boy has!" thought the Lapp-wife. "But I ought not to have spoken of such things in his presence. The best thing I can do now is to frighten him well." Then she said aloud: "Take care, Lappelill, that you never go near Rastekaïs, for there lives Hisü, the Mountain-King, who can eat a whole reindeer at one mouthful, and who swallows little boys like flies."

Upon hearing these words, Sampo could not help thinking what good fun it would be to have a peep at such a wonderful being—from a safe distance, of course!

Three or four weeks had elapsed since Christmas, and darkness brooded still over Lapland. There was no morning, noon, or evening—it was always night. Sampo was feeling dull. It was so long since he had seen the sun that he had nearly forgotten what it was like. Yet he did not desire the return of summer, for the only thing he remembered about that season was that it was a time when the gnats stung very severely. His one wish was that it might soon become light enough for him to use his snowshoes.

One day at noon (although it was dark) Sampo's father said: "Come here; I have something to show you."

Sampo came out of the hut. His father pointed towards the south.

"Do you know what that is?" asked he.

"A southern light," replied the boy.

"No," said his father, "it is the herald of the sun. To-morrow, maybe, or the day after that, we shall see the sun himself. Look, Sampo, how weirdly the red light glows on the top of Rastekaïs!"

Sampo perceived that the snow upon the gloomy summit, which had been so long shrouded in darkness, was coloured red. Again the idea flashed into his mind what a grand sight the terrible Mountain-King would be—from a distance. The boy brooded on this for the remainder of the day, and throughout half the night, when he should have been asleep.

He thought, and thought, until at length he crept silently out of the reindeer skins which formed his bed, and then through the door-hole. The cold was intense. Far above him the stars were shining, the snow scrunched beneath his feet. Sampo Lappelill was a brave boy, who did not fear the cold. He was, moreover, well wrapped up in fur. He stood gazing at the stars, considering what to do next.

Then he heard a suggestive sound. His little reindeer pawed the ground with its feet. "Why should I not take a drive?" thought Sampo, and proceeded straightway to put his thought into action. He harnessed the reindeer to the sledge, and drove forth into the wilderness of snow.

"I will drive only a little way towards Rastekaïs," said Sampo to himself, and off he went, crossing the frozen river Jana to the opposite shore, which—although the child was unaware of the fact—belonged to the kingdom of Norway.

As Sampo drove he sang a bright little song. The wolves were running round his sledge like grey dogs, but he did not mind them. He knew well that no wolf could keep pace with his dear, swift little reindeer. Up hill and down dale he drove, with the wind whistling in his ears. The moon seemed to be racing with him, and the rocks to be running backwards. It was thoroughly delightful!

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Alas! at a sudden turning upon the downward slope of a hill the sledge overturned, and Sampo was pitched into a snowdrift. The reindeer did not observe this, and, in the belief that its master was still sitting behind it, it ran on. Sampo could not cry "Stop!" for his mouth was stuffed with snow.

He lay there in the darkness, in the midst of the vast, snowy wilderness, in which was no human habitation for miles round!

At first he naturally felt somewhat bewildered. He scrambled unhurt out of the big snowdrift. Then, by the wan moonlight, he saw that he was surrounded on all sides by snowdrifts and huge mountains. One mountain towered above the others, and this he knew must be Rastekaïs, the home of the fierce Mountain-King, who swallowed little boys like flies!

Sampo Lappelill was frightened now, and heartily wished himself safe at home. But how was he to get there?

There sat the poor child, alone in the darkness, amongst the desolate, snow-covered rocks, with the big, black shadow of Rastekaïs frowning down upon him. As he wept his tears froze immediately, and rolled down over his jacket in little round lumps like peas, so Sampo thought that he had better leave off crying and run about in order to keep himself warm.

"Rather than freeze to death here," he said to himself, "I would go straight to the Mountain-King. If he has a mind to swallow me, he must do so, I suppose; but I shall advise him to eat instead some of the wolves in this neighbourhood. They are much fatter than I, and their fur would not be so very difficult to swallow."

Sampo began to ascend the mountain. Before he had gone far, he heard the trotting of some creature behind him, and a moment after a large wolf overtook him. Although inwardly trembling, Sampo would not betray his fears. He shouted:

"Keep out of my way! I am the bearer of a message to the King, and you hinder me at your peril!"

"Dear me!" said the Wolf (on Rastekaïs all the animals can speak). "And, pray, what little shrimp are you, wriggling through the snow?"

"My name is Sampo Lappelilli" replied the boy. "Who are you?"

"I," answered the Wolf, "am first gentleman usher to the Mountain-King. I have just been all over the kingdom to call together his subjects for the great sun festival. As you are going my way, you may, if you please, get upon my back, and so ride up the mountain."

Sampo instantly accepted the invitation. He climbed upon the shaggy back of the Wolf, and they went off at a gallop.

"What do you mean by the sun festival?" enquired Sampo.

"Don't you know that?" said the Wolf. "We celebrate the sun's feast the day he first appears on the horizon after the long night of winter. All trolls, goblins, and animals in the north then assemble on Rastekaïs, and on that day they are not permitted to hurt each other. Lucky it was for you, my boy, that you came here to-day. On any other day I should have devoured you long ago!"

"Is the King bound by the same law?" asked Sampo anxiously.

"Of course he is," answered the Wolf. "From one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset, he will not dare to harm you. If, however, you are on the mountain when the time expires you will be in great danger. For the king will then seize whoever comes first, and a thousand bears and a hundred thousand wolves will also be ready to rush upon you. There will soon be an end of Sampo Lappelill!"

"But perhaps, sir," said Sampo timidly, "you would be so kind as to help me back again before the danger begins?"

The Wolf laughed. "Don't count on any such thing, my dear Sampo; on the contrary, I mean to seize you first myself. You are such a very nice, plump little boy! I see that you have been fattened on reindeer milk and cheese. You will be splendid for breakfast to-morrow morning!"

Sampo began to think that his best course might be to jump off the Wolf's back at once. But it was too late. They had now arrived at the top of Rastekaïs. Many curious and marvellous things were there to be seen. There sat the terrible Mountain-King on his throne of cloudy rocks, gazing out over the snowfields. He wore on his head a cap of white snowclouds; his eyes were like full moons; his nose resembled a mountain ridge; his mouth was an abyss; his beard was like tufts of immense icicles; his arms were as thick and strong as fir-trees; his coat was like an enormous snow mountain. Sampo Lappelill had a good view of the King and his subjects, for a bow of dazzling northern lights shone in the sky and illuminated the scene.

All round the King stood millions of goblins, trolls, and brownies; tiny, grey creatures, who had come from the remotest parts of the world to worship the sun. They did it from fear, not from love; for trolls and goblins hate the sun, and always hope that he will never return when they see him disappear at the end of summer.

Farther off stood all the animals of Lapland, thousands and thousands of them of all sizes; from the bear, the wolf, and the glutton, to the little mountain rat, and the brisk, tiny reindeer flea. No gnats appeared, however; *they* had all been frozen.

Sampo was greatly astonished at what he saw. Unobserved, he slipped from the Wolf's back, and hid behind a ponderous stone to watch the proceedings.

The Mountain-King shook his head, and the snow whirled about him. The northern lights shone round his head like a crown of glory, sending along red streamers across the deep blue sky; they whizzed and sparkled, expanded and drew together, fading sometimes, then again darting out like lightning over the snow-clad mountains. This performance amused the King. He clapped with his icy hands until the sound echoed like thunder, causing the trolls to scream with joy and the animals to howl with fear. At this the King was still more delighted, and he shouted across the desert:

"This is to my mind! Eternal darkness—eternal night! May they never end!"

"May they never end!" repeated all the trolls at the top of their voices. Then arose a dispute amongst the animals. All the beasts of prey agreed with the trolls, but the reindeer and other gentle creatures felt that they should like to have summer back again, although they disliked the gnats that would certainly return with it. One creature alone was ready to welcome summer quite unreservedly. This was the reindeer-flea. She piped out as loudly as she could:

"If you please, your Majesty, have we not come here to worship the sun, and to watch for his coming?"

"Nonsense!" growled the Polar bear. "Our meeting here springs from a stupid old custom; the sooner it

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ends the better. In my opinion, the sun has set for ever; he is dead!"

At these words the animals shuddered, but the trolls and goblins were much pleased with them, and reiterated them gaily, shaking with laughter to such an extent that their tiny caps fell off their heads. Then the King roared in a voice of thunder:

"Yes! Dead is the sun! Now must the whole world worship me, the King of Eternal Night and Eternal Winter!"

Sampo, sitting behind the stone, was so greatly enraged by this speech, that he came forth from his hiding-place, exclaiming:

"That, O King, is a lie as big as yourself! The sun is *not* dead, for only yesterday I saw his forerunner. He will be here very shortly, bringing sweet summer with him, and thawing the icicles in your funny, frozen beard!"

The King's brow grew black as a thundercloud. Forgetful of the law, he lifted his tremendous arm to strike Sampo; but at that moment the northern light faded. A red streak shot suddenly across the sky, shining with such brilliancy into the King's face that it entirely dazzled him. His arm fell useless at his side. Then the golden sun rose in slow stateliness on the horizon, and that flood of glorious light caused even those who had rejoiced in his supposed death to welcome his reappearance.

But the goblins were considerably astonished. From under their red caps they stared at the sun with their little grey eyes, and grew so excited that they stood on their heads in the snow. The beard of the Mountain-King began to melt and drip, until it was flowing down his jacket like a running stream.

By-and-bye, Sampo heard a reindeer say to her little one:

"Come, my child, we must be going, or we shall be eaten by the wolves."

"Such will be *my* fate also if I linger longer," thought Sampo. So he sprang upon the back of a beautiful reindeer with golden antlers, which started off with him at once, darting down the rocks with lightning speed.

"What is that rushing sound that I hear behind us?" asked the boy presently.

"It is made by the thousand bears; they are pursuing us in order to eat us up," replied the reindeer. "You need not fear, however, for I am the King's own enchanted reindeer, and no bear has ever been able as yet to nibble my heels."

They went on in silence for a time, then Sampo put another question.

"What," asked he, "is that strange panting I hear behind us?"

"That," returned the reindeer, "is made by the hundred thousand wolves; they are at full gallop behind us, and wish to tear us in pieces. But fear nothing from them. No wolf has ever beaten me in a race yet."

Again Sampo spoke:

"Is it not thundering over there among the rocky mountains?"

"No," answered the now trembling reindeer; "that noise is made by the King, who is chasing us. Now, indeed, all hope has fled, for no one can escape *him!*"

"Can we do nothing?" asked Sampo.

"There is no safety to be found here," said the reindeer, "but there is just one chance for us. We must try to reach the priest's house over yonder by Lake Enare. Once there, we shall be safe, for the King has no power over Christians."

"Oh, make haste, make haste, dear reindeer!" cried Sampo, "and you shall feed on golden oats, and out of a silver manger."

On sped the reindeer. As they entered the priest's house, the Mountain-King crossed the courtyard, and knocked at the door with such violence that it is a wonder he did not knock the house down.

The King is chasing us.

"Who is there?" called the priest from within.

"It is I!" answered a thundering voice; "it is the mighty Mountain-King. Open the door! You have there a child, whom I claim as my prey."

"Wait a moment!" cried the priest. "Permit me to robe myself, in order that I may give your Majesty a worthier reception."

"All right!" roared the King; "but be quick about it, or I may break down your walls!" A moment later he raised his enormous foot for a kick, yelling: "Are you not ready yet?"

Then the priest opened the door, and said solemnly "Begone, King of Night and Winter! Sampo Lappelill is under my protection, and he shall never be yours!"

Upon this, the King flew into such a violent passion that he exploded in a great storm of snow and wind. The flakes fell and fell, until the snow reached the roof of the priest's house, so that everyone inside it expected to be buried alive But as soon as the sun rose, the snow began to melt, and all was well. The Mountain-King had completely vanished, and no one knows exactly what became of him, although some think that he is still reigning on Rastekaïs.

Sampo thanked the priest heartily for his kindness, and begged, as an additional favour, the loan of a sledge. To this sledge the boy harnessed the golden-antlered reindeer, and drove home to his parents, who were exceedingly glad to see him.

How Sampo became a great man, who fed his reindeer with golden oats out of a silver manger, is too lengthy a tale now.

From the Swedish of Z. Topelius.

Next week will appear the opening chapters of a new Serial, entitled: "AN EPISODE OF LIFE."

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A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.—No. 6. (See page 375.)

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THE PURLOINING OF RUTH ALLEN.

Tigerford is the name of a little village in the West of England, snuggled at the bottom of a deep valley, as if hiding from curious eyes. The road leading to it comes down a steep hill, winds in and out among the houses, and, finding nothing of importance to warrant its staying, scampers up the hill on the opposite side and is lost to sight over the top. Viewed from either hill, the road might easily be regarded as a mammoth string which drew the houses together and held them in a tight bunch.

Half way up the hill, south of the village, stood a small cottage. This tiny house, with its acre of ground, was known as the "old Barber's place," and was the home of two maiden sisters, Ruth Allen and Sarah Barber.

The two women had a small income, to which each added according to her strength and talent. Sarah was a large-framed woman, strong and masterful, and took the entire management of the place upon herself. She diligently cultivated the acre of ground and from it supplied the villagers with cabbage and tomato plants in the spring, vegetables and fruit in the summer, and seed cucumbers, cauliflowers, and onions for their autumn pickling.

Ruth Allen was the elder, but as she was a small, delicate woman, and slightly lame from an accident in her babyhood, she was regarded by her more robust sister as little more than a child, and looked after and admonished accordingly. Ruth Allen—she was always called Ruth Allen—being a most unassuming body, never questioned Sarah's ways, but meekly submitted to her discipline even in the matter of the dresses she wore and the food she ate. Ruth Allen did the tailoring for the village mothers, cutting down the garments of the elder male members of the family for the younger, cleaning, piecing, and pressing till they "looked as good as new."

"Now, Ruth Allen," said Sarah, as they rose from the breakfast table one wet June morning, "you sit down and finish them trousers of Johnny Gaskill's, for I told his mother on Sunday she would have them to-night, and you'll have to work 'ard to get 'em done. I've got enough to keep me goin' this mornin', with hangin' out the clothes an' killin' caterpillars on the bushes."

"I did think I'd take a little walk round the garden 'fore I begun sewin'," said Ruth Allen. "It would freshen me up a bit. I didn't sleep very well last night."

"Nonsense!" cried Sarah. "You slep' all night as good as I did, an' you ain't no business traipsin' 'round the garden this wet mornin', either. Like's not you'd step on something an' spile it. 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do,' and feet, too, for that matter."

Ruth Allen took her work and sat down by the kitchen window, but she could not suppress a sigh as she looked out on the dewy freshness of the garden. Sarah bustled about, washing the breakfast dishes, then, drawing a tub of clothes from under the table, began to wring them out. The window by which Ruth Allen was sitting overlooked the village, and she glanced out now and then.

"You'll get your clothes out before anyone in the village," she said, as Sarah took up her basket. "There ain't anybody got theirs out, not even the Widow Filkins."

"You better be tendin' to your work 'stead of watchin' the neighbours," was all the reply that Sarah vouchsafed.

Thus rebuked, Ruth Allen plied her needle so industriously that Johnny Gaskill was in a fair way to get his trousers before the time promised. Sarah's washing was soon swinging on the line.

"It's a purty hot mornin'," she said, as she came back into the kitchen. "You ought to be thankful you can sit here where it's cool, instead of breakin' your back over caterpillars in the hot sun."

"Yes, I know it, but I ain't thankful."

Sarah tied on her sun-bonnet preparatory to her raid on the ill-fated caterpillars.

"I wish you'd look down in the village," said Ruth Allen. "There isn't a livin' soul got any clothes out, and there's lots of folks in the street. I wonder what's happened."

Sarah came to the window, but it was to examine the progress Ruth Allen was making on the nether garments of Johnny Gaskill.

"Now, if you don't 'tend to your work you'll go and sit in the outhouse," she said. "You ain't done two dozen stitches this morning."

This was a situation not at all desirable, so Ruth Allen sewed swiftly, but her thoughts were busy with the possible happenings in the village. What could be the matter? Something startling, or the Widow Filkins would never have neglected her washing. By-and-bye her curiosity got the better of her discretion. Seeing Sarah down on her knees among the gooseberry bushes, apparently oblivious to everything except the wholesale slaughter of her garden enemies, she laid down her work and stole softly into the sitting-room, where from the wall she took an old spyglass that had been her father's. She hurried back. Sarah was still bending over the bushes. She had not been missed. In her fear of being discovered by Sarah, it was some time before she could adjust the glass to her vision.

"Good gracious!" she said, as soon as she could see clearly. "Somethin' has happened. The Widow Filkins's yard is full of folks. Looks as if everybody in the village was there. There's someone stoppin' at the gate. It's the constable, sure's I'm alive. He's gettin' out and goin' in. My, how I wish I could hear what they're talkin' about. Goodness, here comes another person—a stranger. I wonder——"

So engrossed had she become with the exciting scene, she quite forgot to watch for Sarah. She was suddenly reminded of her by having the glass taken away and hearing a stern voice say:

"Ruth Allen Barber, I am ashamed of you. What do you mean by spyin' on the neighbours with a glass? I have to watch you more than I would a child. You take your work and go and sit in the outhouse."

Ruth Allen said not a word, but humbly obeyed. Sarah hung the glass on the wall and went back to her gardening.

"I've got the trousers most done," said Ruth Allen, when Sarah came in to get the dinner. "Is Mrs. Gaskill comin' after 'em, or have you got to take 'em down there?"

"She's comin' after 'em," replied Sarah. "I'll set on an iron so I can press 'em after dinner."

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The simple meal was soon prepared, and the two women sat down to their dinner. They did not linger over it, but ate as a matter of duty. Sarah finished first and rose without ceremony, brought out the press board, and began pressing the trousers. Her back was towards Ruth Allen. Suddenly she turned round and looked at her.

"You was tellin' fortunes, Ruth Allen. Don't deny it; there's the tea grounds in the saucer. A body would think you were fifteen instead of nigh fifty."

"I ain't but forty-one, come August," said poor Ruth Allen. "I wasn't tellin' fortunes, either. I was seein' if I'd get my wish."

"If wishes were fishes we'd have some fried, 'stead of eatin' salt ham half the year. Now soon's I clear off the table I'll bring down that old lilac muslin of yours, an' you can rip it up. I want to make a new 'tack,' and that'll do for the cover."

"Oh, dear!" cried Ruth Allen, "you ain't goin' to cut that up. I want to keep it."

"What for, I'd like to know. You're too old to wear such a dress, and it might be doin' some good if 'twas made into a 'tack.'"

"I wanted to keep it 'cause 'twas the last dress mother bought me."

Now if Sarah had a soft spot in her heart it was for the memory of her mother, and with a short "keep it, then," she turned to her work. After the dishes were washed they exchanged their dark cotton gowns for stiffly starched print dresses, and sat down to sew in their tidy kitchen. They would have thought it immodest to sit out out in the cool shade of the mammoth elm that spread its green umbrella over their front garden.

The long June afternoon wore away. They sewed diligently, and talked little. Sarah's thoughts were on her work, but Ruth Allen's were straying back into her girlhood days, lured there by the sight of the stranger who had been the last she saw enter Widow Filkin's gate.

He had somehow reminded her of her one lover, Harry Chadwick; indeed, in every gathering of men she was sure to see someone who reminded her of him, and she was living over again the delightful days which had ended so suddenly. When Harry Chadwick had won her promise to be his wife, she had added to her softly spoken "yes," "if Providence is willing." If Providence was willing, Sarah was not; and while Ruth wavered between her love for Harry and her fear of disobeying Sarah, Harry grew angry and left Tigerford.

He had never returned, and Sarah was sure that the fire of love that had burned so fiercely in Ruth Allen's heart had long ago turned to ashes. She was mistaken. The coals were there, and the slightest breath from the olden days was sufficient to kindle them into flame, but Sarah never saw their glow.

When Sarah was watering her spinach after supper, Mrs. Gaskill came through the gate.

"It's very warm," she said, sitting down in the doorway and fanning herself with her sun-bonnet. "I'm tired out climbin' that hill, but it's nice and cool up here. Have you heard of the trouble down in the village?"

"No," said Ruth Allen, coming to the door; "is anybody dead?"

"Worse than that," said Mrs. Gaskill. "Folks has got to die, but they ain't got to be robbed. Somebody broke into Widow Filkins's house last night and stole her silver spoons and her mother's old silver candlesticks and four pounds in money."

"Goodness me!" cried Sarah, setting down her watering-pot. "You don't mean to say that robbers have been in Tigerford. There won't be no safety sleepin' nights after this. How'd they get in?"

"Took a ladder and clim' up the back bedroom winder. The money was under a hollow chiny dog on the front mantel. Her spoons was sewed up in her best feather bed, and the bed was cut open, and the room's just full of feathers flyin' about everywhere. I don't b'lieve she'll get them feathers cleaned up all summer."

"Have they ketched the robbers?"

"No; they got away, fer they never found the things had been stole till this mornin'. I tell you we ain't none of us safe now. You'll have to keep locked up pretty tight livin' up here alone as you do. An' what do you think? Harry Chadwick's come back, an' ——"

"Ruth Allen," said Sarah quickly, "you go down into the cellar and fetch up a bottle of that ginger pop fer Mis' Gaskill. She's so warm 'twill cool her."

"Don't say anythin' 'bout him before Ruth Allen," said Sarah as soon as her sister was out of hearing.

"You don't mean she's hankerin' after him yet?"

"I don't mean anything," said Sarah with dignity, "but I don't want Ruth Allen to go thinkin' of those old times. I didn't mean she should know he was here, and—— Yes," she said as Ruth Allen came in with the beverage, "I'm free to confess if there's one thing I'm 'fraid of more than fire, it's burglars. When I've read of folks robbed and murdered in their beds in Lunnon, I've always been thankful that I lived where there was nothin' to molest or make me afraid, but now I shan't take a mite of comfort till that robber's ketched and shut up."

"I ain't a bit afraid of their comin' here," said Ruth Allen; "we have nothin' they'd want to steal."

"Humph, Ruth Allen, they're just as likely to come here as anywhere, and more, too, seein' we're alone. If they didn't find anything to steal, they'd murder us in our beds, and then how'd you feel, I'd like to know?"

Not having had any experience in that line, Ruth Allen was not able to describe her possible sensations.

"Seems to me, if I was goin' to steal anything from you," said Mrs. Gaskill, "it 'ud be your ginger pop. It's very good; the best I ever drank."

As soon as Mrs. Gaskill went away Sarah closed the windows and drew the curtains.

"What makes you shut up so early?" said Ruth Allen. "And I never knew you to draw the curtains till we went to bed."

"Well, I ain't goin' to have any bloodthirsty villains peepin' in the windows at us, and I'm goin' to lock the doors now, too."

"I'd just as soon sleep with the doors and windows both open."

"Them that know nothin' fear nothin', I've always heard say," returned Sarah, pushing the bolt of the kitchen door into its socket.

The kitchen was hot and close, and Ruth Allen was glad when the clock struck nine. Sarah took the candle and went upstairs.

"I declare, Ruth Allen," she cried, stopping short at the top, "if I didn't forget all about shuttin' these bedroom windows. There may be forty thieves in here for all we know," and she peered timidly into the dark rooms, where the flickering candle cast strange shadows.

"Let me come," said Ruth Allen. "I ain't afraid. Nobody'd carry off an old women like me."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout your gettin' carried off," said

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Sarah; "but there's pa's silver watch, and ma's cameo brooch; they'd take them in a minute."

A diligent search failed to unearth any intruder, and Sarah turned to shut the windows.

"We'll smother if you shut the windows," said Ruth Allen.

"I'd rather smother than be murdered," said Sarah, as she pushed the nails into the holes over the lower sash.

It was a very warm night, and Ruth Allen, never a good sleeper, tossed and turned on her bed. If she fell into a light slumber, it was only to be aroused by Sarah's whisper, "What's that, Ruth Allen? I'm sure I heard somethin'."

A few nights of this wakefulness began to tell upon Ruth Allen, and robust Sarah confessed that she felt out of sorts herself.

"I tell you what it is," said she. "We'll both be ill if we don't get our sleep."

"I know it," replied Ruth Allen. "I don't rest hardly any nights, but I could if you'd have the windows open and not keep waking me up."

"Well, I can't sleep," said Sarah, "just as long as that robber is roamin' about; but I've thought of a way so we can both get our sleep. One of us can sleep daytimes, and sit up nights. It can't be me, for I've got the garden to tend to, so it'll have to be you. When it comes nine o'clock you can go to bed and sleep all day, and get up 'bout supper time. I'll have supper ready, and that'll be your breakfast. Then I'll go to bed at night, and you can sit up, and sew, and keep watch. If burglars see a light burnin', they won't come near the house."

"Why not leave a light burnin', and both go to bed?"

"Yes, and waste candles, and set the house on fire. Ruth Allen, there's no knowin' what you'd do if I didn't look after you. I can't sleep till that robber's caught, and till they do catch him you've got to sit up nights."

Ruth Allen, with a meekness born of long submission to a stronger will, gave in, as she always did. That morning at nine o'clock she went upstairs to bed.

She slept till after five o'clock. When she went downstairs Sarah was pouring hot water in the teapot. A plate of toast and a dish of baked potatoes stood on the hearth.

"I'm just puttin' the tea to draw," she said. "As soon as it's done your breakfast'll be ready."

When they sat down to breakfast, Sarah drank a cup of tea, and ate a piece of bread.

At nine o'clock she went to bed, and left Ruth Allen to her watch. Sarah had another reason for keeping Ruth Allen in bed daytimes. Harry Chadwick had been to the house, and asked to see her; but though Sarah told him that her sister would have nothing to say to him, she had caught a glimpse of him two or three times strolling in the field below the house.

Ruth Allen really enjoyed her nightly vigils. For the first time in her life she had a taste of freedom. Sarah slept soundly, as was attested by her cheerful snore; and as soon as Ruth Allen heard it she opened the doors and let in the sweet night air. She hurried through the task which Sarah always set her, and spent the rest of the time in whatever way pleased her fancy.

The moon was at its full, and she wandered through the garden, stooping now and then to caress the blossoms or to pass her hands softly over the dewy leaves. Sarah always reproved her for touching the plants. "She'd spile 'em, handlin' 'em," she said. Sometimes she pulled down her hair and waved it a little on her forehead and coiled it in a loose knot, the way she had worn it when a girl.

"Harry used to call my hair his Golden Fleece. It will soon be a silver fleece," she said to herself.

July had come, and the weather was unusually warm. The nights were not much cooler than the days. One afternoon Ruth Allen came downstairs, dressed in her lilac muslin.

"What have you got that on for?" said Sarah.

"Because it's so hot," said Ruth Allen. "There won't anybody see me. I don't have many callers."

The night was very warm. Just as the sky began to grow light in the east, Ruth Allen blew out her candle and went down the walk to the gate.

"I've a good mind to go up to the oak spring and get a drink. Sarah won't be up for an hour yet."

She opened the gate and went up the hill. As she went she pulled two or three late wild roses and stuck them in her dress. The oak spring—so called because a great clump of oaks grew close by it—was near the top of the hill. There was a trough where horses might drink, but in order to reach it one must make a slight *détour* from the main road. Ruth Allen made a cup of her hands, and filled it at the stream that ran into the trough. She dabbled the cool water on her face. She had not been to the spring for a long time.

All at once she heard the faint sound of hoof-beats.

"It's probably old Mr. Purdy on his way to town," she thought.

She shrank back among the bushes. The horseman drew rein at the spring, and the horse plunged his nose into the water.

"He can't see me unless he turns right round," thought Ruth Allen.

She was leaning on a little clump of bushes that grew on the side of the hill. All at once she felt it giving way. She made a frantic effort to save herself, but the branch to which she clung cracked with her weight. She slipped from her hiding-place. The horseman looked round. It was not Mr. Purdy—it was the stranger whom she had seen at Widow Filkins's gate on the day of the robbery.

"Ruth Allen! Ruth Allen!" cried a familiar voice.

She gazed bewildered. Who was this bearded stranger?

"Ruth Allen, don't you know me?"

"Oh—it's Harry."

"Yes, it's Harry, Ruth Allen. I've stayed here over a month tryin' to get a glimpse of you. I've been back twice since I left you, and both times Sarah has told me you wouldn't so much as look at me. Ruth Allen, I've come back once more to you. Can you forgive?"

"Ruth Allen! Ruth Allen! Come here to me this minute!" Ruth Allen stopped with her hand half extended towards her lover. Sarah was coming swiftly up the hill.

"Is it to be me or Sarah?" demanded Harry, reaching down and clasping her hand. Ruth Allen gave one frightened glance over her shoulder, but her nights of freedom had had their effect.

"You, Harry," she said faintly.

Harry leant from his saddle and lifted the light form of Ruth Allen and set her before him on the horse. Then he turned back into the road from whence he came.

"I'd rather 'twould 'a' been pa's silver watch," said Sarah, as she saw them disappear over the top of the hill.

Flint Wade.

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C. £10.—This Prize we trust may go to some deserving person who really is in want of it. Before paying this sum, however, the letter must be authenticated by some reliable person who can vouch for its veracity.

N.B.—Bear in mind that by purchasing **QUIPS,** price 1s. 3d., entitles you to participate in any or the whole of the **A, B, C,** and **D** contests. We reserve to ourselves the right to be the sole judges in the tasks set. The contests close on Saturday, April 17th, but it is advisable to send your order at once.

Books will be sent on receipt of order. **Prize** money will be dispatched on Tuesday, April 20th, 1897. A letter will be sent with book, stating if missing word is correct. To those who find the correct missing word a Prize is guaranteed.

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Answers to Correspondents.

Skipper.—I should think that the largest amount spent in yachting by one individual is the £32,000 a year got through by Mr. Vanderbilt.

Enquirer wishes to know what is the highest rank in the British peerage. ————The Archbishop of Canterbury takes rank immediately after the members of the Royal Family in preference to every other peer.

H. L. T.—A swallow can fly about 600 miles a day, and can swallow 6,000 flies in the same time.

R. N.—Seathwaite, in Cumberland, is generally considered to be the wettest place in the British Isles, its annual rainfall being about 154 inches.

H. P.—There are thousands of people in our large cities who never saw a mushroom growing in their lives, and their ignorance is taken advantage of by unscrupulous hawkers, who cut turnips into imitation mushrooms and sell them at a big profit. The ones you speak of were doubtless made in this way.

J. P.—Birmingham is the greatest brass-making town in the world. Paris comes in a good second. The watch competition will probably continue for some time yet.

Housekeeper.—The best way to ascertain if coffee is adulterated or not is to pour cold water on it. If pure, it will colour the water very slightly; if there is any chicory present the water will become brown.

G. L.—I should think that Japan has developed in the journalistic line more rapidly than any other country. Twenty-five years ago it had only one newspaper. Now it has two thousand.

W. K.—The Bible you speak of is in the Vatican Library. It weighs 520lb.

Subscriber wishes to know the comparative extent of the land and water on the globe.————If the whole of the land above water-level were shovelled into the Pacific Ocean, it would only fill one-seventh of it.

Ernest.—The story of which you speak was sent to us by a contributor as original. You may rest assured that his name will not again appear in *S.S.*

R. D. B.—The title of "mayor" comes from the French, and originally signified "one who keeps guard."

H. T. wishes to know if black is the universal mourning colour.————Not by any means. On the occasion of a death, the Chinese don white apparel, the Egyptians yellow, and the Turks blue or violet. Even in Europe, in every country except England, violet is the sign of mourning employed by the Court.

I should like to ask my readers to tell their friends about the Watch Competitions now running through *S.S.* Judging from the number of attempts which have come to hand in the first competition at the moment of going to press, they are likely to prove immensely popular.

Walter asks which of Scott's works are considered the finest.————This is rather a difficult matter to decide. Sir Walter himself believed "Waverley" to be his best novel, and "The Lady of the Lake" his best poem, and I fancy most people are of the same opinion.

Guard.—Excursion trains make the greatest profits. Some of these on the Midland Railway nett nearly £200 in one journey.

H. S. T. wishes to know whether I consider soldiers desirable husbands.————It depends entirely upon the soldier himself. You might as well ask: "Do men make desirable husbands?"

L. J.—A man should have attained his maximum height at the age of twenty-five years.

Farmer wants to know the average number of eggs laid annually by a hen.————I should think from ninety to ninety-five would be a good average.

F. L. D. has heard that the English are the best correspondents in the world, and writes to ask if such is the case. ————It would appear so, when we consider the fact that nearly two-thirds of the letters carried by the postal service of the world are written, sent to, and read by English-speaking people.

B. B.—The world's coal output in 1895 was 288,805,229 tons.

N. W.—Thanks for the letter. In none of our papers, however, do we publish such misprints as that which it contains.

A. M. G.—The flesh of the seal is not at all palatable. An effort was made some years ago to popularise this dish, but it failed. It tastes something like a mixture of pork and kippered herrings. Thanks for the book.

E. M.—It is estimated that in England one woman in every six earns her own living.

L. P. S.—It is practically impossible to give you the exact number of fog-signals used throughout the country during the year. Perhaps you will be able to gather some idea for yourself when I say during one fog alone, of thirty hours' duration, no fewer than 40,000 signals were exploded by one company.

Stoker.—A good railway engine will travel about 1,000,000 miles before it wears out. It depends a good deal, however, upon the kind of treatment it receives. With ordinary service an engine should last twelve years.

Antiquarian.—Denmark owns the oldest national flag in the world. It has been in use since the year 1219.

E. B.—"No Man's Heath" is the name given to nine acres of land situated in four counties—Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire. It was formerly the favourite resort of prize-fighters, because the police of one county were unable to make an arrest in another.

Sally.—There are 325,000 servant girls in London alone.

Incredulous.—Your friend is quite right. There was, and may still be, in Milan, a clock made of bread. It was made by a very poor Italian, who, being unable to purchase the necessary materials for its construction, set apart a portion of his bread each day, eating the crust and saving the soft part. To solidify this he employed a a certain salt, and when the various parts were dry they became perfectly hard. This marvellous timepiece is said to have kept good time.

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But when on pleasure he was bent,
Maybe he read ***Short Stories.***

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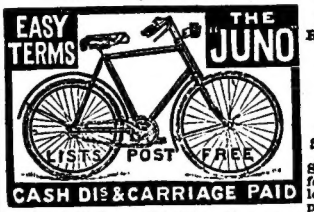

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natures are under a cloud. Our whole life is darkened. Yet there is a remedy at hand. Hundreds of thousands of ailing men and women have found that **Beecham's Pills** verily "make life worth living." They purify the blood, set right the disordered stomach, arouse the sluggish liver, dispel sick headaches, build up the nervous system, and repair the

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caused by overwork and brain worry. Their genuine worth and never-failing efficacy have been fully proved during a period of upwards of fifty years, and they are still recognised as the best safeguard against all bilious and nervous attacks. The most satisfactory evidence of the universal esteem in which **Beecham's Pills** are held is found in the fact that the number of boxes sold annually now exceeds

6,000,000.

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